

A trip to the gold mines of California in 1848. By John A. Swan. Edited by John A. Hussey

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A Trip to the Gold Mines

of California in 1848

BY

JOHN A. SWAN

Edited, with Introduction and Notes

By JOHN A. HUSSEY

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illustration reproduced from an engraving in William M. Thayer's "Marvels of Mining," Boston, 1887.

FRONTISPIECE *from the original photograph of John A. Swan which hangs in the entrance of California's First Theatre, Monterey. Courtesy, Division of Beaches and Parks, State of California.*

A TRIP TO THE GOLD MINES OF CALIFORNIA IN 1848

John A. Swan

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Introduction

THE COURSE OF HISTORY MAY BE LIKENED TO THAT OF A RIVER which meanders back and forth over a broad, level valley as it flows relentlessly toward its unseen goal over the horizon. We know that civilizations rise and fall, that nations are born and then die, and that periods of repression follow eras of license; but usually it is difficult for us to see when the changes begin, to know what forces deflect the course of events.

But every so often a happening occurs which is immediately recognized as important by almost everyone. Such events are history's chutes and crevasses, which suddenly channel the flow of human affairs in new directions. One such occurrence was James Marshall's discovery of gold at Sutter's sawmill on the American River on January 24, 1848.

John Sutter was not a brilliant man, but even he could comprehend that things would never again be the same in the great interior valley of California. He tried to keep the news secret until he could get some much-needed lumber from his mill and make other adjustments in his affairs; but, like spilled quicksilver, the word of gold scattered out in all directions.

Strangely enough, a rush to the mines did not develop immediately. On February 10, Sutter, unable to contain himself, boasted to General M. G. Vallejo of Sonoma that an "extraordinarily rich" gold mine had been found. During that same month he sent Charles Bennett to Monterey to carry to Governor Mason a request for a land claim at Coloma; and Bennett showed samples of gold not only in the territorial capital but in Benicia and San Francisco as well.

Yet it was not until March that Sutter's workmen began to leave him for the diggings. During that month and the next a few gold seekers from the coast, like the former Georgia miner, Isaac Humphrey, made their way into the Sierra foothills; and Sutter's rancher neighbors in the Sacramento Valley began to prospect for placers.

Scepticism concerning the richness of the gold fields was not dissipated in San Francisco until about the middle of May, when Sam Brannan paraded the streets holding aloft a bottle of dust and shouting, "Gold! Gold! Gold from the American River." The mining fever broke out immediately, and within four weeks the town was virtually deserted. The contagion reached Monterey later in the same month but did not really take hold until June. It spread to Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, and through the rest of Southern California during July and August.

Governor Mason estimated that by July 4,000 persons, including Indians, were working in the mines. This number was a respectable percentage of California's total non-Indian population of about 14,000. By the end of the first mining season, in October or November, it is probable that of this mid-year total, 1,300 Spanish-speaking native Californians and 4,000 Americans and Europeans had visited the placers.

At first, these California residents had the gold fields largely to themselves. Nearly all of them were without experience in mining, and they began by picking the precious metal from crevices and stream beds with knives and spoons. xi Gradually, however, they learned from the few old-time miners, like Humphrey, to use the more efficient pan and rocker.

During the first few weeks of the rush, activity centered around Coloma and the South Fork of the American River; but prospectors quickly moved out both north and south, and discovery followed discovery. One observer commented in August that the miners were running over the country and picking gold out of the earth here and there "just as a thousand hogs let loose in a forest would root up ground nuts." When the digging slackened with the coming of winter, the mining region ranged along the Sierra foothills from the Feather River on the north to the Tuolumne on the south, with a detached outpost in the Shasta region at the head of the Sacramento Valley.

The Californians did not long keep their monopoly of the placers. Word of the gold discovery reached Honolulu in June, and during the next month shiploads of gold seekers began leaving the islands for the new El Dorado. Oregon heard the news by early August, and before the end of the year 1,500 to 2,000 settlers from the Willamette Valley had headed south. Mexico, Peru, and Chile made substantial contributions to California's population during the last months of 1848. At the end of the mining season there were perhaps 10,000 men digging in the foothills.

The great historian, Hubert Howe Bancroft, only echoed the words of many old-time Californians when he said that “the men of '48 were of another class from the men of '49” and that the year 1848 was “different from every other California year before or since.” There was a kind of naïve wonderment, a frenzied prodigality and restlessness, and, above all, a *camaraderie* among the forty-eighters which became watered down under the impact of the tens of thousands of Argonauts who swarmed into the gold fields during 1849.

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Everyone who has written about the days of '48 has noted the relative absence of crime in the diggings during that first year of the rush. Claims were indicated merely by leaving a pick or a shovel in an excavation. Claim-jumping, though not unknown, was rare. Bags of gold dust were left in tents and unlocked cabins; and successful miners with their heavy pokes trudged homeward unmolested on the lonely trails to the coast. Even horses, in much demand for moving from one prospect to another, were seldom stolen.

Another characteristic of the forty-eighters—and perhaps responsible for the lack of crime—was the fact that most of them knew each other, by personal acquaintance or by reputation. Particularly during the first months of the rush, they were largely “neighbors and friends, who would not wrong each other in the mountains more than in the valley.”

When the hardy pioneers, for generations schooled in the barter economy of the frontier, and the sailors and soldiers, used to working for a mere pittance in cash, suddenly found their hands literally full of gold, most of them quickly lost all sense of proportion. The supply of wealth seemed

endless, and many felt as did Sergeant James H. Carson of the 3rd U.S. Artillery when all at once, he later recalled, “the Rothschilds, Girard and Astors appeared to me but poor people.” Prices of food and equipment in the mines skyrocketed to fantastic figures, quite out of keeping with the state of supply and the costs of transportation. A number squandered their new-found wealth and never regained their fortunes; others drank themselves into early graves. Forty-eight was one long, wild, happy spree for many, a time of steady, solid accumulation of wealth for others. Never again was gold so easy to find, and never again was the finding of it so enjoyable.

The story of the golden days of '48 is known in broad outline, and some phases of it have been chronicled in xiii considerable detail. This state of knowledge is somewhat surprising in view of the fact that most of the miners were too busy scratching in crevices with knife blades and prospecting for new strikes to keep written records of their wanderings. And, as a matter of fact, much information on the opening of new diggings and the development of improved mining techniques was forever lost.

Nevertheless, a number of forty-eighters wrote accounts of their adventures which, sooner or later, appeared in print. One of the first, and certainly one of the most informative, was Colonel Richard B. Mason's official report of his July trip to inspect the diggings. E. Gould Buffum's lively and valuable *Six Months in the Gold Mines* was published in 1850. During that same year William R. Ryan's *Personal Adventures*—which tells more about Ryan than the gold fields—was issued in London; and Walter Colton's *Three Years in California* was printed in New York. Excerpts from the dispatches of the French consul in California, Jacques Antoine Moerenhout, were published in Paris during 1850; but the entire text of his remarkably fine account of a trip to the mines during the summer of 1848 was not made available in print until 1934 and 1935.

James H. Carson's indispensable *Recollections of the California Mines* came out in 1852. The memoirs of Peter H. Burnett and William T. Sherman reached print during the 1880's. A very brief glimpse of the mines late in 1848 is provided by the journal of Lieutenant John M. Hollingsworth, printed in 1923; and one of the most authentic and informative of all the 1848 accounts, the diary of Chester S. Lyman, was made available in book form in 1924. The recollections of Heinrich

Lienhard throw light on several phases of life in the mines not covered by other accounts. His narrative was completed about 1870 and was published in altered form in 1898, but not until 1941 was there a satisfactory edition. A few pages of Agustín Janssens's *Life and Adventures* deal with his 1848 experiences on the Stanislaus. Although dictated during the 1870's, this account found a publisher only in 1953. Additional statements, some of them based on interviews with pioneers of '48, are found in county histories, in scattered newspaper articles, and in a number of general histories and works on mining.*

In this brief *resumé* of the printed, eye-witness accounts of the 1848 gold rush, no attempt has been made to be exhaustive. In particular, the diaries and reminiscences of persons connected with the discovery at Coloma, such as John A. Sutter, Azariah Smith, Henry W. Bigler, and James Marshall, have been omitted deliberately, since the purpose of this sketch is to list the available sources concerning the rush as it was after the gold excitement became general throughout California.

Notwithstanding the keen interest in the literature of the gold rush which has existed ever since Marshall's discovery, several first-hand descriptions of life in the mines during 1848 have for decades remained unpublished, known to scholars but out of easy reach for the armchair historian and the general reader. Certainly one of the most important of these manuscript accounts, and perhaps the most entertaining, is "A Trip to the Gold Mines of California in 1848," by John A. Swan.

This narrative was written in 1870, evidently for its author's own amusement and, we can believe, for the record, because Swan possessed a keen sense of history.* As far as is known, he did nothing with his manuscript until 1872, when the net thrown out by Hubert Howe Bancroft to drag in source materials for his magnificently conceived history of western North America caught John Swan in its meshes. Perhaps it was one of the circulars which Bancroft broadcast to the pioneer settlers of California asking them to set down their early experiences, no matter how "trifling," which first aroused Swan's interest in the project of the San Francisco historian. It is known that he received a circular and answered some of its questions. At any rate, Swan entered into a correspondence with Bancroft; and on April 27, 1872, the historian sent him some requested information on the Society of California Pioneers.

When sending the manuscript to Hubert Howe Bancroft in 1872, Swan said that the account was written “some 3 or 4 years ago.” Swan to Bancroft, Jolon, June 24, 1872, MS, in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. However, internal evidence in the narrative itself indicates that it was written in 1870, since at one point Swan refers to the death of John Gilroy “last year.” Gilroy died in 1869.

When Swan received this letter he was living at Jolon, in southern Monterey County. He did not reply at once, since, as he later told Bancroft, someone had broken into xv his cabin “and had taken all my writing paper, pens, pocketbook, pencils, gold scales, scizzors, needles, thread, letters, powder Flask, percussion caps, and left me not so much as a scrap of paper or a piece of lead pencil to write with.” But during May he visited Monterey, where he had property, and attempted to stir up enthusiasm for Bancroft's project among the “old boys,” as the pioneer settlers liked to call themselves.

He did not meet with much success, he told the historian, because the inhabitants of Monterey were largely “easy going people and think more of taking the world easy and looking after their life stock interests and to the things of the present than to take the trouble of putting their pens to paper to chronicle things of the past; so much for the old people, while the young ones are very apt to look at persons who do talk of past transactions in California as . . . sort of half lunatics.” But while there he found his gold rush manuscript in the desk in his Monterey home. He brought the account back to Jolon with him and then shipped it off to Bancroft in San Francisco.

“I send it with this letter for you to look over and see if there is anything of any service in it for your work,” he wrote to the historian on June 24, 1872. “If so, you can take a copy or what extracts you wish and send me the original back, for although it is but a rough piece of writing it is facts not fiction, and though it may have no attraction for a stranger it has for me, as it brings to my mind people whom I was acquainted with years ago but who are now dead.”

Bancroft recognized the merit of the work and had his assistants—the manuscript is in two handwritings—make a copy, which is to this day preserved in the Bancroft Library at the University of California. It is presumed that the historian returned the original document to its author; and it is hoped that he sent along with it a copy of a book xvi entitled *Nights in the Guard House*, a work

which Swan had read at sea during his youth and which, he told the historian when forwarding his manuscript, he “would like to look over again.”*

Swan to Bancroft, Jolon, June 24, 1872, MS, in Bancroft Library.

Much of the value—and a good deal of the charm—of Swan's narrative is due to his down-to-earth attitude toward the scenes and events he described. He was no detached observer, standing aloof from the rough work of the diggings. His viewpoint was decidedly that of a pick-and-shovel miner. As a former common seaman he was, to use his own words, “at home” with the runaway sailors and soldiers with whom he lived near the present Placerville and on Dry Creek, and thus he knew from intimate association as well as from his own experience the wondrous excitement which gripped the first miners.

Swan did not expand his account with generalizations about the extent of the placers and the number of miners in the diggings. Rather, he confined his story quite rigidly to his own experiences and observations. And the subjects he described were those which interested the average gold seeker—the cost of tools, the care of horses, the price of gold dust, the difficulties of travel, songs by the campfire, and the availability—or the unavailability—of liquor. The reader of his narrative feels instinctively, “This is how it was.”

Bancroft relied quite heavily on “A Trip to the Gold Mines” when preparing his history of the first year in the California diggings. A good deal of information from Swan's account is found digested in Bancroft's footnotes.* Swan himself later included incidents from the narrative in articles he wrote for Monterey County and San Jose newspapers. But, as far as the present editor could determine from a somewhat limited search, the complete manuscript has never before appeared in print.

See Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California* (7 vols, San Francisco, 1884-1890), VI, chapters 4-6.

The author of “A Trip to the Gold Mines” was in many xvii ways a remarkable man. His true niche in history, perhaps, is as a typical representative of that unsung class of California pioneers which was made up of the lowly on the economic scale—the carpenters, the sawyers, the soapmakers,

the trappers, and the other laborers and craftsmen who gave the territory most of what little it had in the way of industry during the days before the American conquest. We hear a good deal of the more prominent foreign merchants and landowners, such as Thomas O. Larkin, Abel Stearns, and William E. P. Hartnell, but who ever heard of Jack Swan, baker of pies and boardinghouse keeper; or William McGlone, who failed in his attempt to make beer but who forever after was called “Billy the Brewer”; or John Milligan, the wild Irishman who taught weaving to the Indians of San Juan Bautista?

Yet, the men of this class contributed much to the building of California, and they were quite as proud of being pioneers as were their fellow early settlers who became more prosperous. In later life Swan became a sort of self-appointed champion of the poor and the forgotten among the “old boys,” and he wrote sketches of a number of them for the newspapers because he believed they “deserved remembrance.”* He seldom failed to reproach—in public print if possible—any of the well-to-do among the fraternity of old pioneers who slighted or showed evidence of having forgotten their poorer friends. In March, 1878, he met one of his earliest California acquaintances, Josiah Belden, a pioneer of 1841, at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. Belden, by that time wealthy from real estate investments, did not recognize the aging Swan. He “told me he was losing his memory,” Swan wrote a few weeks later to the editor of the *San Jose Pioneer*, “and I thought he was. Living in palaces don't generally improve people's memories, and I suppose the Palace Hotel in San Francisco is no exception to the rule.”*

“How It Was Named,” in *The Pioneer* (San Jose), May 12, 1877.

“Milton Little, Pioneer of 1843,” in *The Pioneer* (San Jose), May 3, 1879.

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Swan's concern for the common man extended to the Spanish-speaking native Californians, whom he regarded with an affection and respect which never descended to maudlin sentimentality. He once took the Reverend Walter Colton to task for not editing his journal more carefully before publishing it. “He should have expunged the word *banditti* from it, as applied to the native population,” Swan wrote in one of his newspaper sketches.*

“Letter from Pioneer Swan,” in *The Pioneer* (San Jose), April 27, 1878.

From the standpoint of posterity, Swan's most noteworthy characteristic was his feeling for the importance of history. It was his firm conviction that his contemporaries did not have much interest in the events of pioneer times on the Pacific Coast. "I believe the average Californian of the present day takes more interest in the genealogies of horses, cattle, sheep, hogs, and goats than they do in that nobler animal man," he wrote to the editor of the San Jose *Pioneer* in 1878; but he foresaw the time when every scrap of information concerning early times would be treasured.* For this reason he had a passion for historical accuracy, even in very minor matters. "In speaking or writing of early days in California, people cannot be too particular about dates," he admonished one luckless editor whose paper had carried an article containing a slight error in reference to the day upon which California's first newspaper had been issued.*

The Pioneer (San Jose), June 22, 1878; and [Swan] to "Mr. Editor," Monterey, December 8, 1869, MS, in Bancroft Library.

The Pioneer (San Jose), December 8, 1877.

In his own writing, he took care to verify facts whenever possible. During the 1870's, after William T. Sherman had risen to the distinguished position of commander-in-chief of the United States Army, Swan did not hesitate to write to him to obtain the date of a trifling incident which occurred while Sherman was a young lieutenant at Monterey in 1847.*

The Pioneer (San Jose), November 10, 1877.

This interest in history and this sensitivity to the requirements of good historical writing are not what one would expect from a person of Swan's background. Beyond the xix fact that his parents were of Scotch descent, little is known about his family. His father, George Swan, was a native of Edinburgh. His mother was born in Canada but had been sent as a child to live with her grandparents in the Scottish capital. The two were married in Edinburgh, but shortly after the birth of their first child, George, they moved to London. There, on November 23, 1817, John Alfred Swan, their second child, was born. Other children followed in rapid succession until there were eleven in all, eight boys and three girls.

In later years John Swan told nothing about his father's business or about the family's economic circumstances, but the latter may be judged from the fact that in 1826, when he was only nine years old, the youth and two cousins were sent to Truro, in Cornwall, to live with an uncle. The new guardian was a merchant, and young John became acquainted with shipping and the ways of the sea.

Unfortunately for the boy, his uncle's business failed in 1828, and during the next year John went back to London. By that time his father had died, and John lived with his mother, his sisters, and a younger brother. The other boys, evidently, were already out earning their own livings or were in the care of relatives. John, too, must have gone to work, because he later said that he never attended school after leaving Cornwall.

In May, 1832, he was apprenticed for five years on the schooner *Barkley* of Newport, Monmouthshire. The vessel was engaged chiefly in the Mediterranean trade, and young Swan visited such out-of-the-way ports as Trieste, Messina, and the Ionian Islands. On one voyage the *Barkley* carried lemons and oranges to St. Petersburg in Russia, and on another it brought a cargo of shot and shell to Alexandria for Mohammed Aali Pasha. "At Constantinople I ate my first grapes," John recalled in later years. But this life was not all romance, and when a chance offered itself in London xx he jumped ship "on account of ill usage."

He quickly found employment on a ship sailing for India, and from there he went to China. Reaching Lintin in April, 1837, he went aboard the bark *Agnes*, commanded by his brother, Captain Robert Swan. Evidently he did not find his brother a congenial master, because he soon left the *Agnes* and joined a schooner engaged in the opium trade. Swan was not one to stay long on one ship, and in October, 1839, he signed on a vessel named the *Harlequin* and sailed for San Blas and Mazatlan on the west coast of Mexico. Reaching the latter port in April, 1840, he left the ship and settled down for a few months of shore life.

During his years at sea Swan acquired the habit of reading. Many a time, he later recalled, he received "a rope's ending" for having his nose in a book when he should have been attending to his

duty. Some of the works he read undoubtedly were the “penny shockers” of the period, but not all. His letters and writings after he reached California show more than a passing acquaintance with the works of Edward Gibbon and Edmund Burke.

This passion for books remained with him all his life. In 1873 when he was living near the San Antonio Mission in southern Monterey County, the wife of a Mexican storekeeper asked Swan how he could remain in a canyon all by himself. She said she would go crazy under similar circumstances. “But then,” Swan told Hubert Howe Bancroft, “she could not read, and was alone when she had no company.” He, on the other hand, had the books he had read and the memory of the persons he had known and thus never felt lonely.*

Swan to Bancroft, Monterey, March 19, 1875, MS, in Bancroft Library.

Swan's fondness for reading may have been partly the result of certain physical traits and psychological characteristics which are revealed by his writings. For most of his life he was plagued by poor eyesight. “I did not know I was so nearsighted until I went to sea, and then I soon found xxi it out,” he said during his old age. He was short in stature and rather ashamed of his appearance. “I was not considered very good looking in my younger days,” he once wrote to explain why he had not until then had a photograph taken. The fact that he never married perhaps reflects the depth of his inner wounds. During his declining years, still another defeat weighed heavily on his mind. In his letters and articles the good-hearted old sailor frequently unveiled an unacknowledged need to defend himself for having failed to make his “pile” as had so many of his California companions of the days before the American conquest.

Ashore at Mazatlan, Swan boarded at the home of a Belgian resident and took life easy for a while. Then his restlessness seized him once more, and on July 6, 1840, he took off on muleback for a trip across Mexico. Passing through Durango, Saltillo, Monterrey, and Matamoros, he ended his journey at Brazos Santiago, where he joined a schooner bound for New Orleans. After a few days at the Crescent City he moved on to Mobile. He remained there several months and then worked for about six weeks on a schooner operating between that port and New Orleans.

In May, 1841, he resumed his travels. He went up the Mississippi and Ohio rivers on the steamboat *Orinoco* to Cincinnati and then progressed by other boats to Wellsville, Ohio. From there he walked to Cleveland, and for the remainder of the year he was employed on schooners plying the Great Lakes. In December, 1841, he went by stage and railroad from Ogdensburg, New York, to Albany and then continued by river boat to New York City. After a few days he sailed for New Orleans, where he joined the British bark, *Dumfriesshire*, bound for Liverpool with a cargo of cotton.

At Liverpool he remained three weeks with one of his brothers, and then he went on to London to spend some time with his mother and his two oldest sisters. This was the last occasion on which he saw any of his relatives. His mother died a year or two later. "And a kind mother she was to me, as well as to the rest of her children," Swan attested.

On November 3, 1842, he left England in the bark *Robert Matthews* for Valparaiso. From there he made his way by steamer to Callao. Characteristically, he walked from the latter port to Lima "to take a look at it." His curiosity satisfied, he returned to the sea and after some voyaging along the west coast of Mexico found himself again at Mazatlan on May 14, 1843.

Mazatlan appears to have had a fascination for Swan, for he went ashore there and remained several months, not stirring from the town except for one walk inland to San Ignacio. But soon he was ready to be on the move again, and he shipped on board the hermaphrodite brig *Soledad*, bound for San Blas and then for Monterey, in Alta California. The vessel was a miserable one, Mexican owned and only 105 tons in burden. Swan found her to "leak like a sieve." Tradition says that his position on board was that of cook, but his own writings apparently give no basis for affirming or denying this conclusion.

The *Soledad* sailed from San Blas on August 28, 1843. Land was made near Point Sur on September 30. At first glimpse, Swan was disappointed in California. He had read Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* and had received the impression that the coast was bounded by plains. Instead, he saw mountains. "It put me in mind of the coast of Old Spain," he later recollected.

The vessel anchored off Monterey on October 2. Swan liked the town, although he was quick to note that it had a somewhat barren appearance since “the Montereyans, like the rest of the native population, were never famous for their gardening propensities.” He found the people xxiii friendly and received the impression that “they did not then value a man for the clothes he wore, or gauge his brains by the depth of his purse.” Having a “bad hand,” he decided to leave the *Soledad* and went ashore on October 7.

Once on land, however, his old restlessness overtook him. He boarded at the home of George Kinlock, a Scotch carpenter and trader, for three weeks and made one excursion to see the Carmel Mission, but he found the town too quiet for his tastes and time growing heavy on his hands. California, he thought, “was out of the world at that time.”

At last he could stand the tedium no longer and asked a fellow countryman, Captain John Rogers Cooper, who had been born on the English island of Alderney, if he could work his passage to Mazatlan. In addition to being a prominent trader and landowner, Cooper at that time was master of the Mexican schooner *California* which was engaged in the coastal trade between Mexico and California.

Cooper at first refused but later told Swan that if he would scrape a boat which the captain had ashore he would be given a chance to join the crew. So John Swan dutifully chipped paint, and when the *California* sailed for Mazatlan on December 10, 1843, he was aboard.

Again, says tradition, Swan was cook, but again Swan's own words fail to provide confirmation. But this time he was something more than a common seaman. While at Monterey Cooper had offered him a chance to go to the Rancho El Sur, near Point Sur, to take charge of the livestock there, but Swan “preferred books to horses or cattle” and declined. Evidently, however, Cooper took a liking to the little sailor, for he permitted him to bring 70 arrobas of dried beef along as a speculation.

When Mazatlan was reached on January 4, 1844, Swan made a few dollars profit on the sale of his beef. One of the passengers on the *California* was not so fortunate. Thomas O. Larkin, the leading American merchant at Monterey, xxiv had shipped a large load of potatoes on the vessel, but on arrival at Mazatlan he found that the little schooner *Susannah*, built on Napa Creek in 1841, had preceded him into port and had satisfied the demand for potatoes. Not only did Larkin receive a poor price for his shipment, but heavy transit duties were assessed on some specie he landed. It was on this trip, however, that Larkin learned of his appointment as United States consul for California, and this news, said Swan, “may have reconciled him to the tax.”

The return trip to Monterey was begun on January 27. On the second day out one of the Hawaiians in the crew came down with smallpox, and the disease spread to several other seamen. When San Pedro was reached, Larkin and another passenger disembarked to ride by land to Monterey. Upon his arrival home, Larkin gave the clothes he had worn during the voyage to a servant to wash, and soon smallpox was raging among the Indians of Monterey. When the *California* finally appeared off the port on March 10, 1844, the customhouse officers met her with an order to go to sea again because of the smallpox aboard; but the same officers brought Captain Cooper the news that his wife had just given birth to a daughter, so the captain swore he would see the governor damned before he would sail again and refused to go.

Despite the disaster the voyage brought to many others, it was a fortunate one for Swan. He had brought back a small selection of trade goods, and he was able to dispose of them for a profit of about \$50. To raise money for further ventures, he sold his treasured frock coat which he had had made in London in 1842, and he exchanged a large writing desk he had purchased in Singapore for a smaller one and \$20 to boot. Partly with the capital thus raised and partly on credit, he bought another 70 arrobas of dried beef and a quantity of butter and cheese, and he and his goods were aboard the *California* when it sailed for Mazatlan again on April 27.

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This time, however, fortune deserted John Swan, and he lost money on his speculations in the markets of Mazatlan. But when the *California* returned to Monterey on June 17, he had another

shipment of trade goods aboard. Before Swan had time to dispose of them, Captain Cooper received orders to sail for Mazatlan with dispatches for the Mexican government. Unable to leave Monterey with his goods unsold, Swan went ashore from the schooner on June 24, 1844. Seemingly it was with a heavy heart that he saw the vessel sail the next day. The pain would have been greater could he have known that he had made his last voyage before the mast. He never again had anything to do with ships except as a passenger.

There is a tradition in Monterey that John Swan landed in the town “penniless as usual” and turned to the baking of pies to make a living. These pies, it is said, sold as fast as he could turn them out, and he thus was soon able to accumulate sufficient funds to buy a lot and build a saloon and boarding house for sailors. Perhaps he did bake pies—there is no record to the contrary—but in accounting for his activities after coming ashore, Swan himself said only that he opened a store at Monterey in 1844. Contemporary records show that this store was operating as early as January, 1845; and all during that year he also boarded seamen. Several of the latter were sick or destitute American sailors whose bills were paid by Consul Larkin.*

Thomas O. Larkin, Accounts, MS, C-B 105/105, in Bancroft Library.

Exactly when Jack bought the lot on the Calle Estrada which he owned all, or nearly all, the rest of his life has not yet been determined. The location, on the southwest corner of the present Pacific and Scott streets, was a good one, convenient to the Custom House landing; and the size, 42 varas by 100 varas, was generous. It must have represented a considerable investment for a man who had earned only a sailor's pittance during his working years.

Undoubtedly Swan made his purchase only after xxvi considerable hesitation. During his trips on the *California* in 1844, influential passengers had offered to help him obtain a rancho in the Sacramento Valley, but he had refused. He had had his “teeth loosened” by the fever and ague while on Lake Erie in 1841, and he had no desire to have them completely shaken out of his head on the banks of the Sacramento or Feather rivers, both of which bore evil reputations as breeding grounds of fever. Also, during his first year ashore he had little intention of remaining permanently in California. So strong was this feeling, in fact, that he never mastered more than a few words of

the Spanish language. "Not expecting to stop in the country, I did not try to learn," he explained many years later.

Yet the fact remains that he bought the lot, and what is more, he had a house upon it. Known today as "California's First Theater," this long, one-story adobe is one of Monterey's principal landmarks. It is frequently stated that Swan had the structure erected in 1846 and 1847. One enthusiastic witness went so far as to assert in later years that during 1847 he was "connected with its construction and dedication in the good old adobe days of Monterey."* But Swan does not give much support to such statements. In fact, his testimony is to the contrary.

"Pioneer Theatrical Exhibitions," in *The Pioneer* (San Jose), May 4, 1878.

Writing to a newspaper editor in 1869, Swan described the character of the Irish sailor, William McGlone, whom he met in 1844 and who, consular records show, boarded at Swan's house in the latter part of 1845. "Billy had a tolerable education, and was a good sort of a fellow when sober, but contrary enough when half drunk," Swan related; "in 1845 he wanted to ride on horseback into my house by the front door, but because I would not let him, he made a blow at me with a Mexican cutlass he had with him, but I dodged the blow and it took out a piece of my door casing, and the mark is there yet, though painted over, for I let it remain so in memory of old times."*

[Swan] to "Mr. Editor," Monterey, December 8, 1869, MS, in Bancroft Library.

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Here in the words of Swan, who was careful about dates, is evidence that the house was standing at least as early as 1845. Perhaps the northern end of the structure, which apparently is the older, was built by Swan when he first bought the lot, or perhaps it was already on the property. The southern section may have been added in 1846 or 1847.

Swan seems to have taken no part in the events of the conquest of California by the United States. He remained quietly at Monterey, making friends with the American soldiers and sailors who occasionally crowded the town. He continued to operate his store, to board seamen, and, it is said, to dispense liquor at a saloon which occupied one section of his building. For the rest of his life he took delight in telling of the little events which came to his notice during the period of military rule

—how he had his eyes blackened trying to break up a fight among a group of sailors, how the crew of the *Portsmouth's* launch stole Billy McGlone's big iron kettle, and how Lieutenant William T. Sherman dumped a perfectly good cask of *aguardiente* into Monterey Bay to keep the soldiers from drinking it. The only claim he ever made to distinction during this time was for having placed an advertisement for a lost horse in the first issue of California's first newspaper, the *Californian*.

But the Mexican War came near to counting John Swan among its casualties. During the spring of 1847 the United States ship *Columbus* arrived in Monterey from a cruise in the Pacific. She carried aboard a “malignant disease” from Manila which spread among the townspeople. Lieutenant Colville J. Minor and nine enlisted men of Company F, 3rd Artillery, died of the malady. “Little Jack Swan,” as he was then affectionately known, was among those who contracted the disease. For a while it was “touch and go” with him, but he finally recovered.

By the time the news of the gold discovery reached Monterey early in 1848, Swan seems to have become quite satisfied with life in the quiet coastal town. For a man of his restlessness and curiosity he was a remarkably long time in catching the gold fever. When he finally left for the mines toward the end of July, he was among the last of the Monterey residents to depart for the new El Dorado.

His labors in the diggings near the present Placerville and on Dry Creek, so vividly described in his narrative, “A Trip to the Gold Mines of California in 1848,” were not remunerative. Upon his return to Monterey in the latter part of October, he carried with him only a modest three pounds of dust—and an unquenchable thirst for the life of a prospector.

Apparently it was about this time that Swan's name became indelibly attached to the story of the theater in California. During the fall of 1847 soldiers belonging to the Monterey garrison had organized a minstrel show and other amateur theatricals. Tradition says that after several performances at the Cuartel, or barracks, and in the open air, they or their successors among Colonel Stevenson's New York Volunteers, received Swan's permission to set up a theater in

the warehouse which adjoined his store and saloon. The first play to be staged in California “for money,” it is said, was performed in Swan's theater during the spring of 1848.

Such may have been the case. However, most of these stories connect the use of Swan's house as a theater with the arrival in Monterey of three companies of volunteers who had been sent there to be mustered out of service. Companies A, B, and D of Stevenson's regiment were disbanded at Monterey on October 23 and 24, 1848.

If Jack Swan's storehouse was used as a theater during the fall of 1848, it was not for long. Many of the volunteers left for the mines as soon as they were mustered out, and on April 1, 1849, Swan leased the building to the United States Government as a warehouse for naval stores.*

Thomas O. Larkin, Accounts, U.S. Navy Agent, MS, C-B 105/26, in Bancroft Library.

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Swan himself was soon otherwise occupied. Sometime before August, 1849, Father Doroteo Ambris visited Monterey with a small sample of scale gold which had been picked up near San Antonio Mission. He left the flakes at James Watson's store, and there Swan saw them. At once he experienced another attack of the gold fever, and a party was organized during August to explore the new placer. Not a trace of color could be found, however, and the prospectors soon returned to Monterey. Evidently this experience did not reduce the fever, and in September Swan and a company of friends, mostly soldiers from the 3rd Artillery, were back at the mines, this time in the vicinity of Jamestown and at the Mariposa diggings.

How successful this venture was is not recorded. Perhaps Swan made a modest “pile,” for by the next year he was the owner of four lots in Monterey; three nearby “wood lots”; a horse, mule, and wagon; his house; and cash and goods to the value of \$2,000.*

M. G. Vallejo, *Documentos para la historia de California*, MS, XXXV, 195, in the Bancroft Library.

At any rate, Swan seems to have returned to Monterey before the end of 1849. And about that time there appears uncontested evidence that his warehouse was being used for theatrical purposes. Writing about General Alfred Sully in 1879, the old sailor recalled that Sully, as a young infantry

lieutenant, “helped to paint some of the scenery for the theatre in my old adobe house in Monterey” during the latter part of 1849 and the beginning of 1850. Letters from Sully to his family written during December, 1849, and February, 1850, confirm Swan's testimony and give lively descriptions of the performances.*

“The Knave,” in *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, California), October 23, 1955. The Monterey County tax records for 1850 list among Swan's possessions “1 House (Theatre).”

During the early part of 1850 Swan continued to live at Monterey, operating a small grocery store and living at a boarding house “opposite Abrego's” run by Wilson and Wolfe. In May, he visited San Francisco on business and witnessed the fire which levelled three blocks of the city. While on another trip to San Francisco in November, he xxx was nearly burned to death in a hotel fire at San Jose. It probably was with some relief that he occasionally rusticated at a ranch which he and his partner, Harris, operated in Carmel Valley. There, the only danger to be feared was from the grizzly bears.

Despite the rather pleasant life which Jack Swan seems to have created for himself in Monterey during the 1850's, he could not get rid of the mining fever. Late in 1851 and early in 1852, and again in 1856, he visited the gold fields of Mariposa County. About 1855 he returned to the vicinity of San Antonio Mission, where traces of gold provided a will-o'-the-wisp which fascinated him for all the rest of his life. Characteristically, he came back to Monterey from one prospecting trip in March, 1855, riding a young mare, lame in one foot, which he had bought specially on account of that defect, “as it would not be worth while for anyone to steal her.” He visited San Antonio again in 1857 with his friends “Billy the Brewer” and “Bob the Fisherman,” but there is no record of the results.

The Fraser River excitement of 1859 gave John another virulent attack of the gold fever. He was at Victoria, British Columbia, in May of 1859, and from there he went to the mines on the mainland. Monterey did not see him again until toward the end of 1863; but he went back to Vancouver Island during 1864 and did not return to Monterey until November, 1866. Nothing is known of his experiences in Canada. In 1879 he sent a sketch of his adventures during a winter on

Thompson River to a California newspaper; but evidently the editor did not think his readers would be interested in such a subject, and the account was never published.

It was after his return from Fraser River that Swan's thoughts began to turn more and more to the "old days" in California. He started to jot down accounts of incidents he remembered, and then he sent them off to editors of xxxi papers in Monterey and the surrounding area. For more than a decade, beginning in the late 1860's, articles by him appeared with some regularity in such periodicals as the *Castroville Argus*, the *Salinas City Index*, the *Monterey Bulletin*, the *Monterey Californian*, the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, and the *San Jose Pioneer*.

As might be expected from his lack of formal education, Swan never mastered all the intricacies of English grammar and punctuation; but with his extensive reading to draw upon, he developed a highly effective and entertaining narrative style. He had an ear for a colorful phrase and did not hesitate to use puns when he saw fit, which was rather often. His articles are frequently recognizable by his rather unsophisticated humor.

"I think the Chico papers might have said a little more of an old pioneer on his death," he wrote to an editor upon hearing of the demise of Albert G. Toomes; "they may plead want of paper, as they have no paper mill; want of ink, as they have no ink manufactory; but they cannot plead want of pens, as they have a large Feather [River] near them which would make a great many quill pens, if they are short of steel ones."

Undoubtedly, Swan's principal reason for writing was to preserve for posterity what he knew of the olden times and the colorful pioneers of California. But there was also an economic motive. Short of cash during his later years and hungry for news, he seems to have hoped that editors would respond to his contributions with free copies of their papers.

A very modest person on the whole, Jack could not repress an occasional revelation of pride in authorship. He once told Hubert Howe Bancroft that he thought one of his sketches, though a trifle, was "as good in its way as many of the articles the Harpers take out of their drawer to publish, and then, it is a genuine California production, not an imported article." When, as occasionally

happened, xxxii an editor failed to publish one of his submissions, he became discouraged and sometimes stopped writing for a while. At first a staunch supporter of Bancroft, Swan later broke with him because of a fancied, or real, slight to his work and knowledge on the part of the historian and one or two of his assistants.

No one has ever collected all of Jack Swan's writings, and probably no one ever will. Many of them would be difficult to identify, since they sometimes carried no signature at all, or appeared over such pen names as "Pioneer," "An Old Salt," or "Pioneer of 1843." Yet if assembled, they would constitute a valuable body of source materials. "Swan's writings are not only interesting," said Hubert Howe Bancroft, "but remarkably accurate, his memory being rarely at fault, and the tendency to testify on matters beyond his personal knowledge—too prevalent among pioneer writers—being in his case reduced to a minimum."*

Bancroft, *History of California*, V, 740

From the late 1860's to the 1890's, "Uncle John Swan," as he came to be known, lived a life which bordered on poverty. His Monterey property provided him with a modest income for a number of years. His adobe house was rented out for a variety of uses, apparently serving at different times as a boarding house for whalers, a "tenement house," a drug store, a tea room, and a "shop." When "at home" he lived at Monterey for, as he told a friend in 1878, "I like the place, in spite of its decayed look, on account of the beauty of its surroundings, and the memories associated with them." But much of his time was spent near San Antonio, still searching for the fortune in gold which always eluded him.

His life in southern Monterey County was a lonely one, and sometimes dangerous. His small cabin near Jolon was broken into on at least one occasion. In 1878, while riding alone from Arroyo Seco to Soledad for provisions, his hat blew off. When he dismounted to pick it up, his horse xxxiii bolted and dragged him for a considerable distance. Severely lacerated, the resourceful old sailor "bound his wounded fingers with Australian blue gum leaves, and found that it did them a great deal of good."

Always nearsighted, Swan's eyes grew worse as he became older; and during the 1870's deafness began to come upon him. During July, 1879, he told the editor of the San Jose *Pioneer* that he supposed he would "have to give up roving in the hills after this year, as I am getting deafer as well as older all the time—a great disadvantage in the mountains." Early November, however, found him still wandering about from place to place and looking forward to his sixty-second birthday on November 23. "I don't know where I shall spend it," he admitted to the editor of the Salinas *Index*.

The old sailor's principal joy during his last years was visiting with his pioneer cronies and talking over early times with them. One of his regular stopping places was the farm of James Meadows in Carmel Valley, and he had other friends near Monterey on whom he could count for occasional bed and board. Sometimes his visits took him as far afield as San Jose and San Francisco. Occasionally such trips were made by train or other public conveyance, but most often he walked.

As the years went by, he became a familiar figure on the roads of Central California. His hatband, bearing the legend, "Pioneer of '43," served as his credentials. Those who enjoyed reminiscing about the past looked forward to his visits, but there were some among his old acquaintances who experienced mixed feelings when the garrulous, rather shabby old sailor made his appearance. Learning that Swan was planning to call upon one editor in 1878, the publisher of another paper slyly wrote, "We'll bet on Jack outwinding him." Yet when Swan died, a Monterey paper said, "He is the only man we ever knew of whom it may be said that he xxxiv had no enemies."

At last old age and infirmities put an end to Jack Swan's wanderings. He lost his little remaining property, and his final years were spent as a county charge. On the evening of January 6, 1896, while walking down a hall in the Monterey County Hospital in Salinas, the venerable pioneer fell dead from a heart attack.

His remains were brought to Monterey, where the town's early settlers took up a subscription to give their old friend a respectable funeral. "Poor old Jack Swan has ended his long and eventful career and gone the way of all flesh," commented the editor of the Monterey *Cypress*. Every man,

woman or child knew him and respected him for kindness of heart. He was guileless like a child, and will undoubtedly secure a reserved seat in heaven, for we honestly believe he is entitled to it."*

Monterey *Cypress*, January 11, 1896. This sketch of Swan's life is based largely upon his own words, as found in numerous newspaper articles. The principal sources are: *The Pioneer* (San Jose), January [27], November 10, December 8, 15, 1877; January 12, February 16, March 30, April 6, 27, May 4, 18, June 8, 22, August 3, 1878; April 12, 19, May 3, 17, August 9, 1879; September 18, 1880; April 2, 1881; *Salinas City Index*, September 27, November 22, December 20, 27, 1877; July 4, 1878; November 6, 1879.

In addition to the other sources cited in the footnotes above, the following works have been useful: Laura Bride Powers, *Old Monterey, California's Adobe Capital* (San Francisco, 1934); John A. Swan, *Historical Sketches*, MS, in Bancroft Library; and George Tays, *First Theatre in California* (typewritten, California Historical Landmarks Series, Berkeley, 1936).

This edition of John Swan's "A Trip to the Gold Mines of California" has been prepared from the manuscript copy in the Bancroft Library. The whereabouts of the original text is unknown. In editing Swan's work for this, its first printing, no significant material has been omitted except for a short section at the very end entitled "Reminiscences of the Alta Cal." This essay, occupying three pages of the manuscript, has no connection with the account of the trip to the mines. After the main narrative had been completed, Swan saw an article in the San Francisco *Alta California* of March 6, 1870, on the arrival of the New York Volunteers at San Francisco. Noting several errors in the item, he desired to make a record of his corrections and chose for this purpose the blank pages at the end of his gold rush manuscript. Swan's comments on this occasion are of no particular interest, and it has seemed best not to include them in this publication. The only other material left out consists of several subheadings used by Swan which interfere with the flow of the narrative.

XXXV

Every effort has been made to preserve scrupulously the sense of Swan's text, but there seemed to be no point to reproducing his unorthodox punctuation or all of his misspelled words and

his frequent abbreviations, particularly since a number of the errors obviously were the fault of Bancroft's clerks who copied from the original manuscript. Certain minor corrections and changes have therefore been made, paragraphing has been supplied, the account has been divided into chapters, and chapter headings have been inserted. But enough grammatical errors and rambling sentences have been left to convey the flavor of "Uncle John Swan's" inimitable style.

The Book Club of California is indebted to Dr. George P. Hammond, Director of the Bancroft Library, University of California, for permission to print Swan's narrative. Thanks are also extended to Mr. James deT. Abajian, Librarian, California Historical Society; Mrs. Maria Daly, Historical Guide, California Division of Beaches and Parks, Monterey; Mrs. Helen S. Giffen, of the staff of the Society of California Pioneers; and Mr. Allan R. Ottley, California Section Librarian, California State Library, for special assistance in the search to discover more about the life and work of John A. Swan.

John A. Hussey

Piedmont, California

September 5, 1960

A TRIP TO THE GOLD MINES OF CALIFORNIA IN 1848

3

CHAPTER ONE To the Diggings on Horseback

ON THE DISCOVERY OF THE GOLD MINES in California in the spring of 1848, but few people in the country believed it at first, and but still fewer believed in the large quantities said to be found. Even the *Alta California* and the *California Star*, newspapers published in San Francisco, ridiculed the idea of men making \$16 per day with only pick, shovel, and pan when several of their employees left them to go gold mining; and I did not believe in the big gold stories myself at first.

And though a few people came from the mines with some dust, there was not much excitement in Monterey until the month of June, when four Mormons arrived on horseback from Mormon's Island with 100 lbs. avoirdupois weight of gold which they had taken out in four weeks.* They were on their way to Los Angeles but had come to Monterey to buy some goods and provisions for the road. And when, in answer to anxious inquirers, they said there was plenty of gold left where they had been at work, the gold excitement broke out in the old town of Monterey in earnest, for it was the first arrival of gold in a large quantity in the town, for though several people had gone to the mines from it, only a few had returned with a few hundred dollars in dust.*

Mormon Island, on the South Fork of the American River about 18 miles below Coloma, was the scene of a gold discovery early in March, 1848. Two Mormons on their way from Sutter's sawmill to his gristmill, near the present Brighton, found "color" at this spot, and later examination by them and other Mormons from the flour mill revealed rich deposits. The vicinity was the "second proved placer," and about 300 men were working there by July. The site is now covered by the waters of Folsom Reservoir.

Accounts differ as to when the gold fever struck in force at Monterey. Sutter's emissary, Charles Bennett, showed samples of gold dust in the town during February, 1848. James H. Carson says that "many" inhabitants left for the mines during April and May, some privately to avoid ridicule in case the discovery proved a hoax. Carson remained an unbeliever until May 10 when, he says, a friend returned from the mines with a "great bag" of gold. *Recollections of the California Mines* (Oakland, California, 1950), 2-4. Jacques Antoine Moerenout, the French consul at Monterey, reported on June 10 that all of the Americans in town who were not detained by important business had already left for the mines. *The Inside Story of the Gold Rush* (San Francisco, 1935), 2. Walter Colton, American alcalde of Monterey, on the other hand, first gives notice to the discovery on May 29 but says the people were skeptical. Not until June 20 does he state that the return of a "messenger" from the mines with samples of gold had produced intense excitement. *Three Years in California* (New York, 1850), 242, 246-247.

But now bullock teams began to be more valuable, and 4 pack animals and packsaddles to rise in the market, as well as picks, shovels, and pans; and the blacksmiths had their hands full sharpening or making picks; and Uncle Sam's soldiers and sailors began to find fault with the slow way they were making their piles in his service. The soldiers grumbled among themselves about the hardships of standing guard, polishing muskets, and cleaning and pipe-claying their leather belts when they might be busy in the mines, putting gold in their leather bags. The sailors growled about the evils of holystoning decks and being forced to leave their hammocks on wet and stormy nights to take in sail when they might be in the mines making money and have no sail to take in and might drink as

much grog as they chose if they had the money to pay for it, without having their backs clawed by the cats for doing so.

As the excitement increased, some of the soldiers commenced their march for the gold placers without asking leave of absence, no doubt thinking it was wasting words and time to do so. And sailors got their land tacks on board, and some of them made a straight wake for the mines, preferring the flapjacks and freedom of the diggings and the jingling of the gold dust in their buckskin bags to the hard biscuit of a man-of-war and the music of the boatswain's whistle.*

There is ample evidence as to the high rate of desertions among the Army and Navy units in California. At one time during the summer of 1848, Colonel R. B. Mason believed the California garrisons would desert *en masse*, but by stern punishments and a generous furlough system, he was able to prevent the complete disintegration of his forces. Nevertheless, the losses were severe. By August 28, 1848, 33 members of Co. F, 3rd Artillery, had deserted from a total of 117 officers and men at Monterey. By September 12 the company's losses through death and desertion amounted to 54 enlisted men.

When a man-of-war's boat came ashore now, the officers were armed to prevent their men from deserting; but desert they did, sometimes in broad daylight, in spite of the bullets from the revolvers. And a party of sailors from the *Warren*, U.S. sloop of war, including the master-at-arms, took a boat and went ashore with it and left it on the beach and stowed themselves in the pine woods till dark, when they came in town and bought provisions for the road. But instead of starting off at once for the mines in company with Peter Brennan,* bricklayer, who was going to the mines with them, they all got drunk; and when they started on 5 the road at night they had so much liquor on board that they brought up on the sandy beach near the Custom House abreast of their own ship, and all went to sleep. And the officers of the *Warren* might have recaptured them without any trouble if they had only known how near the deserters were.

"Peter Brannan" seems to have been the correct spelling of this name, although Brannan himself appears to have written it "Peter Brenan." An Irishman and a bricklayer by trade, he first appears in the California record in 1846. He served in Co. B, California Volunteers, fighting in the Battle of Natividad. He worked at his trade in Monterey in 1847 and went to the mines the next year. Later in this narrative, Swan tells what little is known of Brannan's demise. "Peter was a very good kind of man when sober," Swan said on another occasion, "and was not very quarrelsome when in liquor." [Swan] to "Mr. Editor," Monterey, December 8, 1869, MS.

One of the party, waking up just before daylight, heard the ship's bell strike, and waking up the rest of the party, they proceeded to walk away at a rapid rate from their dangerous position. I did not

know of their sleeping camp on the beach at the time, but they told me about it a month afterwards in the mines while we were camped together.

I was not ready to go to the mines till the latter part of July, and when I did, after buying two horses, I went alone, for the bulk of the people who were going to the mines had left; and if women's rights had come to the vote then I suppose they would have carried the day, as there was three women left in the town to one man.

I left Monterey for the mines the latter part of July with two horses, one to ride and the other packed, and pretty heavy packed he was, for being green at the packing business I overpacked him, for including tools, provisions, spare blankets, and some spare clothing to sell in the mines, I had 240 lbs. on my pack animal, including one pound of glass beads. Some people told me glass beads sold to the Indians for their weight in gold in the mines, but though I did not believe it, I took them with me as they were of not much weight and took up but little room.

I had to call at the Colorado ranch, between the Salinas plains and the Pajaro River.* It was then owned by the widow and children of David Littlejohn, an old pioneer, for I had made a bargain with her for 26 lbs. of *pinole*, parched corn ground into meal. I had used it in going from Mazatlan in Mexico to Durango in 1840, and a person can live and travel on it as food in a pinch when he can get no better; and when mixed with sugar and cold water it saves time and trouble to a green cook.

Swan's memory made one of its rare failures when he wrote the name of David Littlejohn's rancho as "Colorado" instead of the true "Los Carneros." Littlejohn was a Scotch farmer and carpenter who came to California in 1824. By 1833 he had found a bride among the daughters of the country, and his land grant came the next year. His rancho lay immediately east of Elkhorn Slough, about 6 miles north of the present Castroville. During the conquest of California he got into a dispute with a group of Frémont's men who were commandeering cattle and equipment from the ranchos and was nearly killed. He died soon afterwards.

I arrived at the Colorado rancho, got my *pinole*, mixed several pounds of sugar with it, and started again. I made 40 miles from Monterey that day, camping out 3 or 4 miles from old Jack Gilroy's rancho of San Isidro.* But though I traveled fast I lost nothing off my pack animal, for having been formerly at sea, though I knew nothing about packing horses, I knew about making things fast and did not spare rope and rope yarns in doing so.

John Gilroy, an honest, good-hearted Scotch sailor, reached California in the North West Company's vessel, the *Isaac Todd*, in 1814. Sick with scurvy, he was left behind when the ship sailed, becoming the first foreigner to settle permanently in California. In 1821 he married a daughter of Ignacio Ortega, who occupied Rancho San Isidro, which lay directly east of the present Gilroy. Following Don Ignacio's death the ranch was granted to his heirs in 1833. John Gilroy obtained one league. His adobe house, said to have been built in 1825, was located in what is now called Old Gilroy, 2 1/2 miles east of Gilroy. In later years he lost his property, and he died almost penniless in 1869.

I stopped at Gilroy's rancho [for a] time next morning to have a chat with him, as I had known him some time before; but he found fault with my packing arrangements and undertook to pack my mining tools better. And the consequence was I lost my pick, for it dropped out before I had gone far from the rancho, and I did not miss it till I had gone 4 miles and then would not go back to look for it.

Poor old Jack Gilroy. He died last year in poverty, the oldest foreign settler in California, for he came to California in 1814. But if he was able to come back from his grave and speak he would have a growl at the writer in the *Morning Call* * and the Society of California Pioneers to boot, at the first for making such a blunder as to say he came to California in a Hudson's Bay Company's ship when he came out in a North West Company's vessel, for how could he have come in a Hudson's Bay Company's ship when they had nothing to do with the Pacific Coast trade at that time and did not have till years afterwards, until the British government had the two companies amalgamated together to keep them from quarreling and fighting with one another? * And I suppose old Jack Gilroy would growl if he could at the Pioneer Society for not taking notice of and correcting the blunder and would say they might lay out some of the money they are spending on that fine building of theirs in San Francisco in biographical, statistical, and 7 historical accounts of early days and early pioneers in California.

The San Francisco *Daily Morning Call* for July 30, 1869, contained an obituary notice of Gilroy, who had died a few days earlier.

The North West Company, a Canadian firm with headquarters at Montreal, largely controlled the fur trade of the Oregon Country from the time it purchased Astor's Pacific interests in 1813 until 1821, when it lost its identity through merger with its London-based rival, the Hudson's Bay Company. The British government exerted pressure on the two firms to discontinue their bitter strife for control of the fur trade throughout most of the present Canada.

I once joined the Pioneer Society myself, in November, 1850. At least I paid my entrance fee of \$10 by the advice of Mr. W. [D.] M. Howard^{*} and Talbot H. Green,^{*} though I have had no connection with it since, for like other societies I suppose it only remembers rich members and forgets the poor ones.^{*}

William Davis Merry Howard, a Bostonian, came to California by sea in 1839 and in 1845, with Henry Mellus, opened a store at San Francisco. Trading during the gold rush brought him wealth. He was the first president of the Society of California Pioneers, serving from 1850 to 1853.

Talbot H. Green, an overland immigrant of 1841, was for a number of years associated in business with Thomas O. Larkin in Monterey. In January, 1849, he became a member of the San Francisco trading firm of Mellus & Howard. He was active in the business and political affairs of the city until 1851, when he was recognized as Paul Geddes, an absconder with funds from a Pennsylvania bank. Green was the treasurer of the Society of California Pioneers upon the founding of that organization in 1850.

In this paragraph Swan illustrates two characteristic traits which are frequently revealed in his writings: first, his penchant for correcting errors in the historical writings of others, especially writers of newspaper articles; and second, his chiding of well-to-do pioneers in general, and of the Society of California Pioneers in particular, for what he chose to see as neglect of the more unfortunate "old boys" such as Gilroy and himself who had not made, or kept, their piles. The minutes of the Society of California Pioneers for November, 1850, contain no indication of any action towards membership on the part of Swan.

I arrived at Mr. Murphy's rancho^{*} about noon and stopped there till 4 p.m., for it was a very hot day, when Sergeant Charles Layton^{*} of old Company F, U.S. 3rd Artillery, with Private Russell H. Main,^{*} rode up to the house. They had been dispatched from Monterey in quest of deserters, and I traveled with them, and we stopped at Captain Fisher's rancho of the Laguna Seca^{*} that night.

Rancho Ojo de Agua de la Coche was then owned by Martin Murphy, Sr. The ranch house built by this estimable Irish pioneer of 1844 was described by a visitor of 1847 as being built of upright poles and "exceedingly open." It stood near the present town of Morgan Hill, evidently on the southern part of the Laguna Seca rancho. Being close to the main road from Monterey to San Jose, it was a favorite stopping place for travelers, and it is said that "even the most humble wayfarer found welcome."

Charles Layton was the Orderly Sergeant (or Ordinance Sergeant) of Co. F. He was an Englishman and had served in the British Army. After trying the gold mines from 1849 to 1852, he returned to Monterey, later becoming keeper at the Point Pinos Lighthouse. He was mortally wounded in 1855 helping in an attempt to capture the bandit Anastasio García.

This name is sometimes written as "Russell M. Main."

William Fisher, a Boston sea captain, purchased the Rancho La Laguna Seca in the Santa Clara Valley in 1845. Swan had known him during the early 1840's on the Mexican coast. Captain Fisher did not live much of the time on the ranch, his main efforts being devoted to a retail business in San Jose. The ranch house was near the north end of the property, about a quarter mile east of the present Coyote. It was described in 1847 as "a dirty place."

Next morning we rode on and passed through the Pueblo of San Jose and camped halfway between there and the Mission of San Jose during the heat of the day under the shade of some trees. While there, an Indian came along on horseback from the mines, and Sergeant Layton bought some gold dust of him at \$8 per ounce. As none of the party had any weight or scales, we made a pair for the occasion with a piece of twig for a beam and some cotton rag and twine for scales, using Mexican silver for weights.

We stopped at the Mission of San Jose that night. Next morning we traveled on, and I made my first acquaintance with a California mosquito, for though I had been living in California 4 years it was my first bite from a mosquito, and I suppose he was one of a few stragglers from the sloughs of the San Joaquin. Shortly after making the acquaintance with the mosquito, our party separated, Layton and his comrade going for Amador's rancho^{*} to meet Lieutenant E. O. C. Ord, now General Ord,^{*} and a party of soldiers after deserters and I riding for Livermore's rancho,^{*} where I arrived at noon.

José María Amador's Rancho San Ramón was in the southern part of the present Contra Costa County and the northern part of Alameda County. His adobe home stood on the site of today's Dublin. The sturdy old soldier, who bore 14 arrow wounds in his body, was absent at the mines when Swan passed near his ranch. In later years he lost his property and had to move from his beloved San Ramón. He boasted that grape brandy had "been his beverage from boyhood," and he smoked 40 cigarettes a day. In 1883, when he claimed to be 106 years old, he was in good health and weighed 180 pounds.

Edward Otho Cresap Ord, a native of Maryland, graduated from West Point in 1839 and came to California as a first lieutenant in the 3rd Artillery. On July 25, 1848, which must have been within a few days of his visit to Amador's, Ord dated his "Topographical Sketch of the Gold & Quicksilver District of California," one of the best-known of the early maps of the gold fields. Ord served with distinction in the Civil War and became a brigadier general in the regular army in 1866.

Robert Livermore was one of the first of the "old boys" to establish himself in California. An English sailor, he deserted from the trading ship *Colonel Young* about 1822. He married into a Californian family and settled in the Livermore Valley as early as 1837. Livermore and José Noriega acquired the Rancho Las Positas in 1839. The Englishman later obtained the complete ownership and then added to his holdings by the purchase of the Rancho Cañada de los Vaqueros. His adobe house, which stood about 1 1/2 miles north of the center of the present Livermore, was a well-known stopping place for those on their way to the mines.

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I was acquainted with Bob Livermore, as the old settlers used to call him, the year before in Monterey, and he had lived there previous to moving to his rancho. After having dinner with him I went down and camped in a bottom below the house with a large party from San Jose on the road

for the diggings, who were to leave next morning for the mines. Mr. Peter Davidson,^{*} of San Jose, Weeks,^{*} and Mr. Charles White, alcalde of San Jose who was killed some years afterwards by the explosion of the steamer while going from San Francisco to Alviso,^{*} were among the party. Some discharged or deserted volunteers were there also.

Peter Davidson, or Peter Daveson as he was also, and perhaps more properly, called, was a native of Europe—he could not remember in later years if he was born in Italy or Austria—and came to California as a young man of about 25 in 1841. He established himself in San Jose in 1842 and lived with Charles M. Weber until 1845. By 1846 he operated a store and hotel there. He married a granddaughter of Luis Peralta. After visiting the mines in 1848, he returned to San Jose, where he owned property in 1849. He was still living there as late as 1884. James W. Weeks was a bandy-legged English seaman who jumped ship at Sausalito in 1831. After floating about for a number of years working at odd jobs, he settled down, first at Santa Cruz and then at San Jose. He served as first alcalde of the latter town from September 14, 1847, to February 9, 1848, when he was succeeded by Charles White. Known in later years as “a kind old gentleman,” he died in San Jose in 1881. Charles White came to California overland in 1846. Settling with his wife at San Jose, he was appointed a town councilman in December, 1846. He became first alcalde on February 9, 1848, and served until the end of the year. He was among the 31 persons killed when the steamer *Jenny Lind* exploded off Las Pulgas Ranch on April 12, 1853. One wonders how the members of this group of San Jose gold seekers got along together in view of the fact that during November, 1847, White had been one of a group of citizens who had declared Weeks an unfit person to be alcalde.

Mr. Josiah Belden,^{*} with a geologist^{*} for a companion, stopped at our camp for a short time that afternoon on their way to San Jose from the mines. They had been through different parts of the mines; and I remember the geologist saying there was little gold in the Stanislaus country, though miners who knew nothing about geology found plenty shortly afterwards.

Josiah Belden, born in Connecticut, came overland to California with the first immigrant party in 1841. After a varied experience as a merchant, he early in 1848 opened a branch store in San Jose for the San Francisco firm of Mellus & Howard. But, as Bancroft says, he “soon followed his customers to the mines,” leaving the store in the charge of a friend. Belden had left the Old Dry Diggings to return to San Jose on July 22. In later years Belden became wealthy through real estate investments; he moved to New York during the 1880's. Geologists were few and far between in California during 1848, but the identity of this one has not been definitely established.

We left at daybreak for the San Joaquin Valley. We traveled slow, and now and then we would come in sight of an old California cart broke down and sometimes abandoned, the goods in it taken away [by] other teams or pack animals. Sometimes we would meet returning miners on foot driving their skeletons of horses before them with a stick, for they were too poor to be ridden, having

enough to do to carry their own bodies without riders, for if the miners in early days had a good time, the poor horses had pretty hard ones. And in answer to inquiries about the mines, some of the miners were not backward in showing their buckskin bags and the gold that was in them.

We camped that night near a slough a few miles from the San Joaquin River where the feed was good for our animals and fine wood convenient. And we thought we should pass a pleasant night but were disappointed, for after supper and smoking and talking a while, the whole party laid down and well rolled up in blankets to keep clear of the mosquitoes who were bleeding them so freely and making them pay toll to them. Like other greenhorns, I always thought mosquitoes were worse on newcomers than old residents. Perhaps like the human race they like a change of diet. After tossing about and trying to sleep for some hours, it was given up for a bad job by the whole party for that night, and the campfires were started afresh and were soon surrounded by men determined to make the best of a bad job; and smoking, singing, and spinning yarns was indulged in by the whole party more or less till daylight.

After breakfast I packed and saddled up and started ahead of the rest of the party for the San Joaquin. It was slow traveling on account of mud and water, and I did not get there till after noon.

The only means of transport across the river was a small boat belonging to Mr. Charles Weber^{*} of Stockton; but he was not there nor was there anyone in charge of her, and she was free to the use of the public. Mr. John Robertson^{*} and Mr. Alfred Townsend,^{*} bakers and saloonkeepers, partners, were there with a California cart and bullock team, with a load of goods; and three more men from Monterey were with them. They were getting their things across the river when I arrived, and by the time everything was across the river and the team ready to start it was 5 p.m., and I concluded to go with them. The San Jose party stopped on the opposite shore that night.

Charles M. Weber, a native of Germany, came overland to California in 1841, settling at San Jose. During 1845, he acquired full ownership of the Rancho del Campo de los Franceses, upon which in 1847 he laid out the town of Tuleburg, which in 1849 was renamed Stockton. Soon after knowledge of the gold discovery became general, Weber went to the mines and, with a group of friends and Indians, helped open the diggings on Weber Creek. By early July his camp on Weber Creek was a center for the Old Dry Diggings, and his store there, "nothing but an arbor of bushes," was doing a rushing business.

John Robertson was an Englishman who reached California in 1847 in the Chilean ship *Confederacion*. He opened a bakery and saloon with Alfred Townsend in Monterey, but soon went to the mines. He later settled in the Salinas Valley and died in 1870.

Alfred A. Townsend came to California from South America in 1847. He joined John Robertson in Monterey to establish the firm of Townsend & Robertson, bakers and saloonkeepers.

With the exception of a narrow strip of ground 100 yards in width close to the banks of the river and a small knoll about 100 yards farther from the river, the flat country was under water for a mile, though in no case more than two feet deep; and we had to go through the mud and water to reach the firm ground beyond it. About 3 weeks before, when the river was up high, a returning miner in trying to pass through was drowned.*

The early settlers of California had generally considered that floodwaters made crossing the San Joaquin River "impracticable even for horsemen" from early July to about mid-August, but the thirst for gold led the miners of 1848 to "brave all dangers." By July 13 of that year two men had been drowned crossing the river. The grave of one of them, William Whiteman, was well marked, and probably he was the person referred to by Swan.

We were in hopes of getting through the water and camping the other side of it, but the ground was so soft and the cart was so heavy loaded that we only reached the knoll after a great deal of trouble and, not wanting to be bogged in the water at night, concluded to stop at the knoll that night and have the day before us to pass through the water, in the morning, so made our campfires and had supper and laid down to sleep. And though the mosquitoes were around in swarms, I was so fatigued and used up, on account of [no] sleep the night before, that I slept like a top; and I believe all the mosquitoes on the San Joaquin could not have kept me awake that night, though I could hardly see out of my eyes in the morning from having been bitten so badly by the mosquitoes during the night; and my face was all swelled up.

We had an early breakfast and an early start, for the two-legged animals as well as the four-legged ones wanted to get out of that mosquito patch as quick as possible. And fortunately we got through the water and on dry land with less trouble than we expected and were on our road for the crossing of the Mokelumne River shortly afterwards. People at that time in California, especially newcomers, used to turn up their noses at the land in the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys as well as other parts of the country, and if the grass did not suit them called it a barren country, and called the people who talked of stopping in it fools to stay in a country where there is little or no

amusements and only beef and beans to eat and [all] most of the people thought of was to make money in the mines and go to some other country to enjoy it.

We crossed the Mokelumne that evening and camped and by sleeping near smoking fires managed to keep off part of the mosquitoes. Next day we traveled to the Cosumnes River and crossed it and camped near Sheldon's house^{*} and stopped there all the next day, partly to recruit and to pick up intelligence from the mines, for we were in no hurry.

Jared Sheldon, born in Underhill, Vermont, may have visited California by way of New Mexico as early as 1832. His permanent arrival, however, appears to date from 1840. A carpenter by trade, he worked at various places, including Sutter's Fort, John Marsh's ranch, and the Monterey Custom House. In 1844 he was granted the Rancho Omochochumnes, which he operated in partnership with William Daylor, an English seaman. The ranch extended along the north bank of the Cosumnes River from the present U.S. Highway 99 east to beyond Sloughhouse. The two ranchers built a gristmill—generally known to travelers of the gold rush period as “Daylor's Mill” or “Daly's Mill”—on the Cosumnes near the east boundary of the rancho.

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During the day several parties passed our camp from the mines, some going down the country and some on their way to look for richer diggings. Among them was Mr. William Pitts,^{*} who left an American whaler in Monterey in 1844, who told us the Old Dry Diggings, about 3 months old, had the cream taken off already, and his party was going to look for better. The fact was some of the early miners who were inexperienced in the business, it being a new business to them, thought they would find gold in such quantities that they could take it out by the ton and often left very rich diggings to look for richer and often found poorer. But they opened up the country for the benefit of those that came after them but threw away their own time on moving.

Evidently Henry F. Pitts, who on July 7 and 8, 1846, carried to San Francisco the news of the raising of the United States flag at Monterey. In 1847 and 1848 he had an interest in a quicksilver mine near San Jose, and he reached Dry Creek on his way to the gold fields on June 15, 1848.

After we arrived at Sheldon's we started again on the road for the mines and after a day's drive camped on a creek among the foothills, where we had wood, water, and good food for our animals. I stopped with the party 2 days while Jack Robertson and another man rode over to the North Fork of the American River to see how things were there. During his absence I sold one of my secondhand blankets for 2 1/2 ounces of gold dust.

On his return, finding that he was going to stop for a few days more in his present camp, I left on the following morning for the Old Dry Diggings near where Placerville is now.* Shortly after I left camp I met Lieutenant E. O. C. Ord, Sergeant C. Layton, and a party of 12 or 14 soldiers of Co. F, [3rd Artillery], on their way down the country from their hunt after deserters, but several more of his men left Lieutenant Ord on his way down the country and went back to the mines. In fact, it was impossible to stop the men if they were inclined to desert, and about this time it was the custom to give them 2 months furlough to go to the mines to keep them from deserting.*

The Old Dry Diggings proper were at the site of what is now Placerville, on Hangtown Creek. There is some difference of opinion as to who first discovered them in the early summer of 1848. James Marshall was in the area during June and later claimed the honor, but credit usually goes to the Cosumnes River rancher William Daylor and his companions, Perry McCoon and Jared Sheldon. At about the same time, Charles M. Weber prospected along Weber Creek, which was also considered "on the Old Dry Diggings" by the gold hunters who soon flocked there. Two miles south of Placerville, Weber and a group of companions set up a trading post which became a supply point for the miners in the vicinity. According to James H. Carson, the Old Dry Diggings were "the center of attraction for gold diggers" during June, July, and August, 1848. "The population then there (exclusive of Indians) consisted of about three hundred—old pioneers, native Californians, deserters from the Army, Navy, and Colonel Stevenson's volunteers, were there mingled together, the happiest set of men on earth. Every one had plenty of dust."

Each furloughed soldier carried with him a certificate giving the starting and terminal dates of the furlough. These certificates are interesting documents, containing descriptions of their bearers. For an example see the *San Jose Pioneer*, August 21, 1880.

About 2 hours after I met Lieutenant Ord's party I fell in with Sergeant James H. Carson, Quartermaster Sergeant, and another private soldier on their way from Monterey to the mines.* I believe they were the first soldiers that got a furlough to go to the mines from old Co. F, U.S. 3rd Artillery. I traveled with them that day, and we camped that night at Webers Creek on the Old Dry Diggings.

Swan may have been mistaken in his belief that Carson was on his way to the mines from Monterey, since Carson in his own account of his adventures in the gold fields states that he left Monterey on May 10 and does not mention a return to Monterey during July. James H. Carson, a native of Warren County, Virginia, joined the Army as a young man; he served against the Seminoles in Florida and came to California in 1847 as second sergeant of Co. F, 3rd Artillery, later being appointed quartermaster sergeant. Contracting the gold fever in May, 1848, he went first to Mormon Island. Disappointed with the returns there, he moved on to the Old Dry Diggings, which were his headquarters when Swan met him. In August Carson moved on again, going southward and becoming the discoverer of several rich strikes. Carson Creek and Carson Hill, near Angels Camp, are among the places which preserve his name. "Carson, though fortunate in mining," said Swan in later years, "was too

liberal to take care of the gold he made." Carson's account of the gold excitement, *Recollections of the California Mines*, appeared in 1852, the first book to be published in Stockton, California. When he died in Stockton early in 1853, he was a member-elect of the State legislature.

And after staking out our horses and making a campfire, Sergeant Carson told me he would show me how soldiers made their bread in Florida when camped out and fighting the Indians; so, mixing some flour and water together with a little salt added, in a tin pan, he made some small cakes and threw them on the coals and had them cooked in a short time afterwards, that is, burnt outside and raw dough in. I had one taste and that was enough for me; but I thought if that was the way the soldiers made their bread in Florida I don't wonder so many died there, for it would kill more men than the bullets of the Seminole Indians. Such bread would kill the Devil if that was possible, much less a soldier or sailor either.

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CHAPTER TWO

Log Cabin Ravine and Dry Creek

THE NEXT DAY I PACKED UP AND RODE TO THE TOWN, as the spot where the trading tents were [was] named, and stopped at the brush shanty of Mr. Bernard MacKenzie^{*} and Mr. Murray^{*} that day. They had lived in Monterey before the mines broke out, and I was at home with them. Next day I moved over to the Log Cabin Ravine.

Bernard McKenzie, a carpenter and mason at Monterey from 1846 to 1848, was one of the first prospectors to reach the Old Dry Diggings.

Probably Michael Murray, a resident of San Jose. It is known that "Messrs Murray and Phalen, of San José," were at the Old Dry Diggings at that time. Carson, *Recollections*, 6. On July 8, 1848, Chester S. Lyman prospected in a ravine about four miles north of Weber's camp, "where an Irishman named [Michael] Murray obtained about \$3000 in 3 or 4 days." Chester S. Lyman, *Around the Horn to the Sandwich Islands and California, 1845-1850* (New Haven, 1924), 268.

When I left Carson the day before, I met an old acquaintance and bought an old blunt pick from him for a Mexican ounce gold coin. I might have bought it for an ounce in gold [dust], but I did not give [it] a thought, though gold dust was often bought in the mines at that time for 4 or 8 dollars in

silver, as they wanted it to gamble with.* But who cared about a few dollars then, when ounces was so plentiful?

The price of gold dust varied greatly during 1848. Generally, any person who was not an Indian could buy \$16 worth of goods for one ounce of dust at most stores throughout California. Storekeepers usually kept a separate set of weights for Indians, thus assuring that their dust brought less in trade. When it came to selling dust for coin, however, the situation was entirely different. There was no standard price. Cases are recorded where miners, anxious to obtain specie for gambling, sold dust for as little as \$1 an ounce, although even gamblers usually demanded \$3 or \$4 an ounce. During the summer of 1848, a price of from \$6 to \$8 was common in the mines, but by November gold often brought from \$10 to \$12.

The Log Cabin Ravine was named so on account of some men commencing to build one a short time before. But after raising the walls and cutting out a place for a window but no door, they left without putting a roof on. Three small ravines formed the head of it, and after running through a small flat for 200 yards, [it] then contracted and run for another 100 yards, and then descended by falls to a deep canyon below among high hills; but while I was there few people went down into it as it had the name of being well 14 inhabited by grizzly bears, and the miners could get gold enough the first season in the Old Dry Diggings without going among the grizzlies after it.

Just below where the three ravines joined together was a pool of water and a little spring above it where we got our drinking water. There was about 25 men camped there when I arrived—half a dozen soldiers belonging to Co. F, U.S. 3rd Artillery; 4 or 5 volunteers of Stevenson's regiment; the party of sailors and marines from the *Warren*, sloop of war; Peter Brennan and several men from Monterey; and two or three from Santa Cruz, Jack Scott* being one and a preacher named Dunlevy* and his partner.* But the parson and his comrade slept at the town but worked in the Log Cabin Ravine.

There were about ten persons named Scott in California prior to 1849, and it is sometimes difficult to determine which one is meant by any particular reference. Swan's Jack Scott probably was the John Scott who came to California in 1845 as a member of the Grigsby-Ide party, lived for a time in the present Yolo County, and became a lieutenant in the California Battalion.

James G. T. Dunleavy, a Methodist minister, came overland to California in 1846. He was prominent in San Francisco affairs during 1847, but before the end of that year he moved to Santa Cruz, where he assisted in the inauguration of Protestant services and, in April, 1848, was proposed as alcalde. On June 4, 1848, on his way to the mines from Santa Cruz, he spoke at a temperance meeting in San Jose. One who attended described the gathering as "nothing great" and noted that while Dunleavy was a "decent speaker," his audience could not forget "how shockingly he beat his wife a short time since." Lyman, *Around the Horn*, 257.

This partner was Adna A. Hecox, another overland immigrant of 1846 who soon became a resident of Santa Cruz. A Methodist, he had been associated with Dunleavy in preaching some of the earliest Protestant sermons in California; and he went to the mines with him in June.

Some of the soldiers and several of the sailors could sing good songs, and after quitting work for the evening and having supper, the time would be passed round our campfires in singing and telling yarns till it was time to go to bed. Everyone seemed happy and full of hopes. No quarreling or fighting took place, and though it is so many years ago, I can still think with pleasure of the happy evenings we passed in the Log Cabin Ravine.

Alexander Patterson,^{*} who had been a sergeant in Colonel Stevenson's regiment of N.Y. Volunteers and who kept a saloon afterwards in San Francisco and died there in 1849 or '50, camping with 3 more volunteers and others one night near the spring at the head of the Log Cabin Ravine, was the first, with his party, to work it, for one of the party getting a good prospect, the four went to work and with their pans made 6 lbs. of gold by noon. And as other men came along, several stopped; and when I arrived there it was quite a camp.

John Alexander Patterson came to California in 1847 as a member of Co. D, New York Volunteers. Despite, or perhaps because of, a connection with the infamous "Regulators" of San Francisco in 1849, he became fairly prominent in the city's politics, being elected a member of the Assembly in California's first legislature.

Most of the gold seemed to be in the left bank and flat and seemed to pay all the way in, though the farther you went in there was more stripping to do. And as in all 15 coarse gold diggings, it was spotted, though as a general thing it all paid well; and though I did not make much myself, I might have made more if I had run about less.^{*} And I saw others make a great deal of money there. I sold another spare blanket for 2 1/2 ounces of gold dust and received 7 ounces more for my pound of glass beads from the Digger Indians, which was more than I expected, though a short time before they had sold for their weight in gold.

On August 21, 1848, Chester S. Lyman and his mining companion decided to try digging in the Log Cabin Ravine, "where within the last week or two a great amount of gold has been taken from the southern bank of the stream, a flat being there formed between the foot of the hill & the bed of the stream from 10 to 20 yards in width. This has already been dug back nearly half way to the hill & continues rich....One man averaged over \$100 for 8 days." Lyman, *Around the Horn*, 275. Such an extensive excavation of a ravine was unusual in the flush days of 1848. Ordinarily at that time the bottoms of gulches were dug out only to a width of 3 or 4 feet. Then the miners considered the place exhausted and moved on to newer discoveries.

There was great talk in our camp about bears at times. One evening after supper two soldiers named Thomas Elliot^{*} and John Evans^{*} went over to the trading posts to buy some provisions. They were on their way back to camp with a large chunk of fresh beef when they fell in with a grizzly bear who, smelling the beef, made for them, when they dropped the beef and took to their heels and did not stop till they got to the trading posts, where they stopped all night and came back to camp next morning. But the bear did not pursue them, preferring good fat beef for his supper to thin soldier, for they were both of Pharaoh's lean kind.

Thomas Elliot (or Elliott) was a private in Co. F, 3rd Artillery.
John Evans was another private in Co. F, 3rd Artillery.

William McGline^{*} and another Irishman named Frank, a tall man, were camped about a mile from us; but though they camped together, each worked on his own hook. Frank made a great deal of gold and threw it away on liquor and would be away on the spree for two or three days together. One day while he was at a liquor tent drinking, with his buckskin bag [of] gold dust in his hand and untied at that, a looker-on told him to be more careful or he would lose his gold, at which he seized the bag at the bottom and scattered it all around on the ground outside the tent, saying he could get plenty more. He had three lbs. in the purse at the time, and it was nearly all lost.

William McGlone, as the name was properly spelled, was an Irish sailor who arrived in California in 1837 aboard the wrecked American whaling vessel, the *Commodore Rodgers*. He brewed beer for "a very short space of time" but had to give it up as unprofitable, since the Californians preferred *aguardiente*; but his nickname, "Billy the Brewer," remained with him for life. He tried his hand at a number of jobs, among others working in Isaac Graham's distillery and making soap for T. O. Larkin. He was frequently in trouble with the California authorities for one reason or another. He served with the American forces during the conquest of California, being wounded at the Battle of Natividad. He went to the mines in 1848. By 1857 he was working in a brick yard in Monterey. Soon afterwards he went to Santa Barbara with a cart, horses, and his dog, "Boatswain." He was drowned soon after reaching his destination, but, Swan assures us, "he sold his dog just before that happened." *The Pioneer* (San Jose), April 6, 1878.

Frank, after he left the Dry Diggings, went to the Middle Fork of the American River and made \$7000 in a short time, and it lasted him 6 weeks, when he was dead broke 16 again. I met him next year at Jamestown. He had made another raise and spent it; and he kept steady till he had 30 ounces, and that went to keep the other company.

When Frank was on the spree, McGline, or Bill the Brewer as he used to be generally called in California, was left alone in camp. They had bought a quarter of fresh beef between them, and after hanging [it] up to a tree near their camp, Frank went on the spree. And a bear came along the first night and had his supper off the beef; and as McGline had no rifle, the bear ate his supper in peace. The next evening the bear made his appearance again after more beef, and McGline, not liking such a companion near him, took his blankets and came down to Log Cabin Ravine to sleep. And after that, whenever Frank was away, he would come to our camp to sleep. It was not so easy to get ammunition at that time in California, as it was prohibited to be sold for fear of the native Californians creating a disturbance.

Among the soldiers was a young Irishman named Haggerty,^{*} and he was very lucky. I saw him myself make 12 ounces with the pan one forenoon; and among other purchases he bought a large black mule, for he intended to start for the Middle Fork of the American River in a short time, for the diggings there were just beginning to be found out. Feed was very scarce round about the camp and on the hills, and the horses would come around the camp and eat anything they could find—flapjacks, tea leaves. They had to come down from the hills to the pool of water to drink.

John K. Haggerty, a private in Co. F, 3rd Artillery, was in the mines on a furlough. After leaving the Log Cabin Ravine, he went to Ford's Bar, on the Middle Fork of the American River, where in a short time he gathered 60 pounds of gold. His companions thereafter referred to him as "the successful miner." He died before 1880.

One dark night and no moon, after talking till it was time to go to sleep and some of the miners had spread out their blankets and some laid down for the night—most of the conversation had been about bears and other animals—something was heard coming down through the bushes towards the water and afterwards towards the log cabin. And as most people's thoughts were on bears and it was too 17 dark to see, of course everybody thought it was a bear; and what few arms there was being unloaded, there was a scattering. Some got up trees; some stowed behind them and bushes; and some got over the walls of the log cabin into it; and I, being small, got through the window. But while some nearly got jammed trying to get through and others getting over it, up came the animal, and it proved to be Haggerty's big black mule. And if ever a mule got a cursing it did that night, and then there was a general laugh at their own fears.

Perhaps it was just as well there was no firearms ready that night, for in the dark they might not only have shot the 4-legged mule but some of the two-legged miners up in the trees and among the bushes. Certainly none of the miners, whether citizens, soldiers, or sailors, distinguished themselves that night, though they made fun of it afterwards. John Haggerty left a few days afterwards with a few more for the Middle Fork of the American River, taking his black mule with him.

A sailor—I don't know whether he was a man-of-wars-man or had belonged to a merchant vessel—having made considerable gold and thinking treating people to grog by the glass was rather a slow way to get rid of his dust, bought a barrel of liquor and put a tap in it, and it was free to the traveling public as well as the miners working round near him. I don't recollect the name of the liberal shellback as he was not an acquaintance of mine, but I recollect the circumstances as well as that he was camped on a small knoll.

I might have done better myself in the mines had I opened a store, for though I had not brought money enough with me to do so, I could have got plenty of gold dust to have done so, for I was well acquainted with many of the miners; and they wished me to do it. One offered me \$1000 and others hundreds, and I might have had \$5000 at 18 command without paying one cent interest if I had been inclined to take it. But like others, I was attracted by the glitter of the gold in the ravines and gulches and the wild, independent life of a gold miner, for at that time in California most of the miners had great hopes, though few of them were destined to be realized.

One day Peter Brennan and myself undertook to clean out a circular basin just below the Log Cabin Ravine and below a fall, though there was no water in it, expecting to get considerable gold, though unfortunately for ourselves we were so disappointed at our ill luck in searching the basin that we did not look above and below it, where the gold was.

Peter, a day or two after, borrowed my saddle to go to Sutter's Fort to see an old acquaintance of his. There was no Sacramento City then. He had a horse of his own, or borrowed one. He went to the fort, got on the spree, and then went down to San Francisco and kept on the whiskey line so long that he had the delirium tremens and jumped into the bay in one of his fits and was drowned.

And that was the last of Peter Brennan, a good-hearted fellow and nobody's enemy but his own and a good bricklayer to boot. And it was the last of my saddle, for I never saw or heard of it afterwards, but in those days we did not think so much of our losses as we do now, as they was so easily repaired.

One morning after breakfast I went up a short distance in one of the small ravines leading into the Log Cabin Ravine and stopped at the foot of [a] little fall in it, about 2 feet, and there was a small pothole in it, which went down about 18 inches. I had my pan with me, though there was no water nearer than our camp. I had a very long sheath knife with me, and I could just get my hand and part of my arm into the hole, and I commenced scraping with the point of my knife. After scraping a while I began to see gold shine, and as I worked away at it I saw it was a small nugget, but 19 it held fast in a crevice of the hole. But from what I saw of it, I thought I was bound to have a 5- or 6-ounce piece. At last it gave way, and instead of being a large nugget, it was only a small one worth \$26. A small knob had kept it jammed. I was quite disappointed, and though I spent that afternoon and all the next day round and near the pothole and worked with pick and crowbar, I only got about \$5 more gold.

Mr. Dunlevy, the Santa Cruz preacher, never came to work on Sundays, stopping at or near the trading tents to keep his Sabbath. One of the marines who had run away from the *Warren*, not having made much and being short of dust and intending to leave for other diggings, went to work on the preacher's claim one Sunday and, as he had a good one, took several ounces out of it that day but did not wait to hear what the preacher would say to him about picking his slate pocket of gold while absent, but put for parts unknown early next morning. Though some people with loose morals may think this was a clean trick, most of the miners in the Log Cabin Ravine thought it was a dirty one. But it was the means of bringing a preacher into our camp, though I don't recollect his saying any prayers for the benefit of the community. The preacher and his partner moved shortly after this occurrence and camped near their claim, concluding to take the gold out of their own pockets in the slate without help from outsiders.

Another trick was played shortly afterwards by Lewis Belcher* William Roberts,* sailor who had left a Boston hide drogher before the war, worked in a small ravine in the hills a mile from our camp. There was no water [to] wash there, only a little to drink. There was very little dirt in the ravine, and the gold was in the crevices and coarse, but the crevices were as hard as the rock itself. And as tools were scarce and blunt at that time, he spent a week before he had a fair chance to work at it, only making 2 ounces the next 20 week. The next week he made 100 ounces, not washing a pan of dirt but merely washing the gold before he put it into his bag. One day he made 3 lbs.

Lewis F. Belcher, a native of Orange County, New York, first appears in the California records as a member of the California Battalion in 1846-1847. He was in Monterey during 1847 and went to the mines in 1848. By about 1850 he had become a "large dealer" in cattle, and he acquired much property. He was known as an "eccentric character," who hated his enemies—"whose names were legion"—with "an abiding and consuming hatred," but he was considered to be a man of enterprise and courage and a "true friend." Stout, well-built, and handsome, he was sometimes called the "Big Eagle of Monterey." He was a member of the Vigilance Committee of 1856 and was accused of wanting to use that body to get rid of one of his enemies. He was shot to death while talking to a friend in the bar of the Washington Hotel in Monterey on the night of June 18, 1856.

Little is known about William Roberts beyond what Swan tells here. Perhaps this American seaman was the same William Roberts who served in Co. D, California Battalion, during the American conquest of California.

There was plenty of ground for Belcher to work at it in the same ravine without working [?]

Roberts's place, which it had taken him so much time and trouble to open, but then he would have had to work a few days before he could get much gold; and knowing Roberts would not be there on Sunday, Belcher took a lad with him and, under pretense of looking for horses, went to Roberts's claim and, as the tools were there, they took out 17 or 18 ounces. If he had done it with some men, they would have shot him. Most of the miners thought this was a dirty action, though no doubt Belcher thought he was doing a smart thing, for such tricks laid in his line, and he had no scruples on the subject.

I had worked a few days in the same ravine with Roberts, a few feet above him. One day I made \$45, but on an average I did not make over one ounce per day there; and as it was some distance from our camp, I quit it, for like other green miners I did not know when I was doing well.

In September the greater part of the miners quit the Log Cabin Ravine in search of richer diggings, and a few found better; but I believe the greater part did not. A few days before I left the Log Cabin

Ravine for the Cosumnes River, I went to see Capt. J. B. R. Cooper,* who was camped, with some Indians he had working for him, halfway between our camp and the town, or trading tents. I had sailed with him in 1844, but though an old shipmate, he forgot to ask me to have a drink of grog.

John Bautista Rogers Cooper, born on Alderney, one of the islands in the English Channel, first came to California in 1823 as master of the schooner *Rover* from Boston. He established himself at Monterey in 1826 as a merchant and trader, soon marrying into the prominent Vallejo family. In 1839 he became captain of the schooner *California*, which was owned by the Mexican government. Swan made two voyages under Cooper on this vessel between Mexico and California during 1843 and 1844. Cooper acquired a large amount of property and died wealthy at his home on Bush Street, San Francisco, in 1872.

About the end of September I left the Dry Diggings in company with William Roberts and a colored man named William Warren,* who had lived in Monterey previous to the discovery of the gold mines. As I was the only one of the party who had horses, I did the packing part of the business. We only went a short distance that night and camped.

William Warren is said to have come to California as early as 1828. He was with Ewing Young's trapping party during 1832 and 1833. He died at San Jose in 1875, being known as "Uncle Billy."

The Old Dry Diggings or, rather, the Log Cabin Ravine, was the first mining camp I was in, and though it is 22 years ago, it is still fresh in my memory. It was to me more like a pleasure party than anything else. No one worked very hard; everyone had great hopes; and round our campfires at night we would pass pleasant evenings, singing and spinning yarns. Not a quarrel took place, or fight, while I was camped there. Neither was there many there who drank liquor to excess. As it was my first mining experience, so likewise it was, taking it in all, the happiest, as I saw no blows struck while there.

The second day's journey brought us to Sheldon's ranch on the Cosumnes River, and we stopped there all the next day and then started the next morning for the Dry Creek, for fresh gold diggings which had been discovered a short time before near Hicks's* rancho, though Hicks at that time confined himself to looking out for the horses of the miners at so much a month per head.

William Hicks, a native of Tennessee, came overland to California in 1843 with the Chiles-Walker party. He trapped beaver and otter and served as a ranch overseer for Sutter and Sinclair until the outbreak of the Mexican War, when he joined the California Battalion. In 1847, evidently, he established a ranch on or near Dry Creek. Later he moved northward to the site of Hicksville, on the Cosumnes, where he died in 1884.

There were several carts and wagons from Monterey, and I was acquainted with most of the people there—citizens, volunteers, and some of Uncle Sam's regulars who were absent without leave from their post in Monterey. The diggings in the creek were shallow, and I averaged about one ounce per day during the week I stopped there, crevicing and blowing the dirt, but I did not work much in the bank. It paid better, and after I left there was a great deal of gold taken out of the bank. But like some others, I had something to take me to the coast and left the mines when I ought to have stopped; but like other people then, I was green at the mining business.

Pipes were scarce then at the Dry Creek, for there was only one among the 8 persons I was camped with, and each used to have his turn at smoking it, though just before I 22 left there was some pipes arrived, so that each man could have a pipe to himself.

I let my 2 horses go, for they were in poor order, but left ropes on them. But after the second day I missed them for 3 days and could not find them nowhere round. But one afternoon, while crevicing on the creek, one of the party I was camped with called out to me that there was a man riding one of my horses; and another man cried out that there was another man riding the other, so I went to see about them.

It seems the parties riding them had been using them since I had missed them, without asking leave, though they knew they belonged to me and, on my claiming them, said they had bought them and refused to give them up. But as one of the party who had my horses was always on the steal when he could get a chance and a notorious liar to boot, I did not believe him, as he had been accustomed to carry on the same game since he left a Boston hide drogher in 1844, being put ashore and into the calaboose for making too free with the ship's cargo.

After telling me they had bought the animals, on some of the miners coming up, they said they would give them up if I would pay them for finding them. But finding that yarn would not go down with the miners or me, [they] wanted me to treat them and some of their acquaintances; but I declined, as I thought that, with stealing and lying, they did not deserve it. And they had to give up the horses without; and they had a rather narrow chance of being lynched for their pains, for though

a few glasses of liquor did not amount to much, it did not go down with the miners there to treat men who had stole their horses after [they] were found out.

They had some music on the Dry Creek and passed a merry time at night; but as the month of October set in it began to get cool after sundown. One of the teams from 23 Monterey having concluded to go to the Old Dry Diggings, I left with them, as I thought I would go to Sutter's Fort and sell my two horses there and go to [the] San Joaquin River and start a ferry there.

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CHAPTER THREE

A LONG JOURNEY HOME

WE LEFT THE DRY CREEK IN THE AFTERNOON in the 1st week of October, and camped a few miles from it near some willows, where there was some water and feed for our animals. There was other teams there as well, and we passed a pleasant evening round our campfires that night. And next morning I left them on my way to Sutter's Fort, where I arrived in the afternoon.

Inside the fort the buildings were rented for stores and restaurants. Here I heard that Capt. Cooper had passed a short time before with his Californian oxcart on his way to the ferry on the Sacramento River, so I concluded to follow him and gave up the notion of selling my horses there. I went into Mr. Samuel Brannan's^{*} store in the fort and bought some provisions, white sugar and tea, and had a large soldier's canteen I had with me filled with sherry wine. Mr. Brannan was at San Francisco himself at the time; and I started for the ferry.^{*}

Samuel Brannan, Mormon elder and prominent San Franciscan from the time of his arrival in 1846, opened a store at Sutter's Fort on October 12, 1847. Mellus & Howard of San Francisco had an interest in the concern, which carried the name "C. C. Smith & Company" after another partner, Charles Smith. The store did a brisk business with the start of the rush to the mines, and on May 21, 1848, it was moved to larger quarters in a granary. By then branches were flourishing at Mormon Island and Coloma. Smith sold his interest to Brannan, and by July, 1848, the store was operating under the name of "S. Brannan & Co." The large receipts from this business helped make Brannan for a time the richest man in California.

The ferry across the Sacramento had been established by John A. Sutter. It was tended by a few faithful Indians who each night would bring the day's receipts to the fort, "after deduction for a few bottles of brandy." The landing place on the east bank was at Sutter's *embarcadero*, near what is now the foot of K Street, Sacramento.

When I arrived there, the ferryboat was on the opposite side of the river with Capt. Cooper's party, so I had to wait till it came back; and in the meantime I went into the board shanty, a few yards square, where they sold liquor and had a glass of wine. It was the only house there and was the beginning of Sacramento City, for all the business was done at the fort then. While at the fort I met some men from the Stanislaus River who told me there was considerable gold there, but provisions were scarce and sugar was worth an ounce of gold the tablespoonful.

I had brought my pick and shovel along with me. On the return of the ferryboat, I crossed to the opposite bank of the Sacramento River, but unluckily I forgot to ask the ferryman which way the California cart had gone, for there was two roads, one through the tules when the river was down and which was the shortest, and the other one when it was up but which was twice the distance but was dry and was the most beaten one.* I took my shovel from my pack animal and hid it in the bushes to save packing it, as I did not know but I might want it again if I came back that road, and took the long road, expecting to fall in with the California cart soon, as there were cart tracks. But I traveled till dark and no cart to be seen, and I camped for the night and staked the horses, feed being plenty round.

Before the days of improved roads, travelers wishing to go from the vicinity of the present Sacramento to the north shore of San Francisco Bay could, in the late summer and fall, set out a little south of west across the tule-covered plain of the western Sacramento Valley to Putah Creek, then on to near the present Vacaville, then westerly to Napa or Sonoma or more southerly to Benicia. During winter and spring, however, most of the lower western Sacramento Valley became an impassable quagmire, and travelers had to turn northward along the natural levee on the west bank of the Sacramento River to the present Knights Landing, where a strip of high ground, built by an old channel of Cache Creek, formed a natural causeway leading westward to the base of the Coast Range. This circuitous trail, somewhat euphemistically termed "the winter road," then led southward past the Wolfskill ranch to the Vacaville vicinity. Even during the dry season this longer route was more heavily used than the so-called "summer road."

I did not trouble myself about making tea that night but made my supper of cold boiled ham and biscuit and washed it down with sherry wine and water with some sugar in it. I had bought a large

ham while on the Dry Creek and gave my \$26 chunk of gold for it, though rather unwillingly, and had the half remaining boiled for the road before I left. I slept pretty sound that night, and the mosquitoes did not trouble me, thanks to the sherry wine.

And next morning, after an early breakfast, I packed up and was on the road again, as I supposed for Benicia. I met no one on the road that day to ask about it and saw no cart, which I thought strange; but I came in sight of the river again and traveled near it all day, but I did not think it was the Sacramento but some stream emptying into it, for I had never been in that part of California before.

At dusk I camped among some timber near Mr. Knight's rancho,^{*} but I did not know it, as it was too dark to see the 26 house, which was about a mile off. During the night I heard some wildcats or catamounts screaming, but though they spoilt my sleep, they did not molest me or my horses. Perhaps they thought they was too poor and could get plenty of fat colts on the rancho.

William Knight's log cabin stood on an Indian mound near the junction of the lower Sycamore Slough with the Sacramento River at the present Knights Landing in Yolo County. Knight, a native of Baltimore, Maryland, came to California from New Mexico in 1841. A former mountaineer, he often absented himself from home on hunting trips—leaving his New Mexican wife at home to take in the neighbors' washing. In 1845 he joined the company of foreign riflemen raised by John A. Sutter to assist Manuel Micheltorena, Mexican governor of California, during the latter's unsuccessful attempt to crush a revolt on the part of the native Californians. Knight took a prominent part in the Bear Flag Revolt in 1846 and then went south as a member of Co. A of Frémont's California Battalion. Soon after Swan's visit, he moved to the Stanislaus River and founded Knights Ferry. He died in November, 1849.

A short time before daybreak I heard dogs barking, and I knew then I was not far from some house or camp; and after an early breakfast I saddled up and went to the house, but I was surprised when Mr. Knight told me I was as far from Benicia as I was after crossing the ferry, by the tule road, and told me I had better stop and rest my horses for a day.

I had known him years before in California when he used to pass through Monterey both before and after the United States flag was hoisted in California. He had been down with Captain Sutter to Los Angeles in 1845 and with Frémont in 1846, so I was at home with him, for old Californians, no matter from what country they came from, were kind and hospitable towards one another. He

offered me a horse in good order for my 2 poor ones, and like a fool [I] declined it, for I wanted to take them both back to Monterey.

Knight was about just getting better from the fever and ague and, speaking of his rancho, said it was good land, but it did not agree with his health or that of his family, as they were sick most of the time. And he said he intended to sell it and buy a place near the coast, where there was no fever and ague.

A party of otter hunters from Santa Barbara had been up the coast north of San Francisco Bay otter hunting and had come up from the bay and been to Feather River, but though gold was plenty, they were nearly all sick with the fever and ague before they were there a week, and left on their way for the salt water. One of the men who was pretty bad stopped at Mr. Knight's rancho on the [way] down in 27 hopes of getting well and going back to the mines. As I had a small bottle of quinine with me, I left half of it with him, but I heard afterwards the poor fellow died a few days after I left.*

This reference to the otter hunters demonstrates the amazing accuracy of Swan's memory. The party was headed by George Nidever, whose memoirs confirm most of the details recalled by Swan. William Henry Ellison (ed.), *The Life and Adventures of George Nidever* (Berkeley, 1937), 73-75.

On the following morning after my arrival, I was on my road, and [I] camped between Wolfskill's and Vaca's ranchos.* I met several people on their road to the mines that day. Next morning, on my arrival at Vaca's rancho, I bought some barley for my horses and found that Captain Cooper had stopped there the night before and had started in the morning with his cart for Sonoma. In the afternoon, a few miles from Benicia, I met Mr. Samuel Brannan and another person on horseback, on their way to Sutter's Fort. And after stopping me for a while to answer all his questions about the mines, he quite forgot to ask me to take a drink out of his pocket pistol, for I have no doubt he had one in his pocket at the time. Some old pioneers would have done so.

At this time John Reed Wolfskill was living on the Rancho Rio de los Putos which had been granted to his brother, William Wolfskill, in 1842. John's small house, built of poles and mud, with a tule roof, stood on the south bank of Putah Creek, a short distance west of the present Winters. Manuel Vaca and Juan Felipe Peña were grantees of Rancho Los Putos, south of the Wolfskill grant. Vaca's adobe was near the present Vacaville.

I arrived at Benicia that evening but had to stop a couple of days till I had a chance to cross [on] the ferry. I was acquainted with Dr. R. Semple,^{*} who started the first newspaper in California in Monterey [in] 1846 but who was then living in Benicia, and went to see him several times while there.

Robert Baylor Semple was a Kentuckian who came overland to California in 1845. Although trained as a printer and dentist, he at first took up ranching in the Sacramento Valley. He was a leader of the Bear Flag Revolt and went to Monterey as a member of the California Battalion. Soon leaving the military, he, with Walter Colton, founded California's first newspaper, *The Californian*, in August, 1846. Late in 1846 he and General M. G. Vallejo joined forces to found the new town of Francisca—later Benicia—on the north shore of Carquinez Strait. During the next year, Semple and T. O. Larkin took over the project, and Semple founded a ferry across the strait. A visitor to Benicia in July, 1848, found the town practically deserted except for Semple, who was making a fortune carrying gold seekers and their horses across the strait in a ship's boat rigged with a lateen sail. A month later there were three ferry boats at Benicia, but one had gone adrift.

The ferryboat put me over one afternoon but, on account of the tide, did not land me at the regular landing place, and when I had got up the hill with my horses, there was so many trails that I did not know which to take and camped among the hills that night. My horses were so poor they could scarcely carry themselves, much less me. The small brown horse I was riding, in crossing a small ravine, stumbled and fell across it, and as there was not much room to turn himself, I lifted him bodily up and just put him on his legs.

Next morning I struck the San Pablo road and walked on 28 foot, driving both horses ahead of me. I stopped a short time at Gallivino Castro's rancho^{*} to get some barley for my horses and to buy some food for myself, as I had run out. There was no men there. I had no specie with me, and the women would not take gold dust, as they said they did not know whether it was good or not; and I run the risk of getting nothing for myself or horses either, but I got one dollar and fifty cents from them for a pair of long worsted stockings, and with that I received barley for my horses, dinner for myself, and a lot of apples as well.

Probably Alvino Castro, one of the eleven children of the then deceased Francisco María Castro, who had been granted the Rancho San Pablo in 1823. The main ranch house, now destroyed, stood on San Pablo Avenue in El Cerrito, just north of the boundary between Alameda and Contra Costa Countries.

I suppose some people in California would feel inclined to doubt my story, though a true one. I don't suppose at the present time in California there is any danger of people across the bay from San Francisco refusing gold dust for barley, a dinner, and some fruit.

I arrived at the Mission of San Jose that evening, and after unsaddling my horses, while I was talking to Daniel Williamson^{*} a young Scotchman, after getting feed for my horses, some pigs eat up the apples I had bought from Castro's rancho but fortunately did no more damage to the rest of my things. I had known Williamson previously in Monterey, before the discovery of the gold mines. He had been twice in the mines and done well, but died, I believe, next year from consumption.

Bancroft believes that Daniel Williamson was the same person as David Williamson, who arrived in California in 1846 and served in Co. F, California Battalion. Except for this brief mention by Swan, almost nothing is known about him.

I sold a pair of new pants that evening in the mission to a man for \$7 in cash, which I expected would pay my expenses to Monterey without selling gold dust in small quantities, which is a great loss to the seller. I met several soldiers belonging to Co. F, U.S. 3rd Artillery, at or near the Mission of San Jose that evening and next morning on the road to the Pueblo, all absent without leave from their posts and on their way to the diggings. I had met one on Mr. Knight's rancho, named Loyd,^{*} who had given me a small package of gold dust for an acquaintance of his in Monterey, which I delivered when I arrived there.

Horace Lloyd, Co. F, 3rd Artillery.

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Next morning after breakfast I left with my two frames of horses for the Pueblo of San Jose and arrived before noon and intended, after my animals had a good feed of barley and I had my dinner, to go to Gilroy's rancho of San Isidro or part of the way that night; but there happened to be a New York *Weekly Herald* in the house I was stopping at, of a late date, and I had not seen one for a long time before. And as I am partial to reading, I spent so much time reading it that it was too late to start that afternoon with the expectation of getting far that night, so I gave up the notion and stopped in San Jose till morning; but what [with] feed for the animals and my own expenses for meals and

some bottled ale and porter, it took nearly all my specie, though it made but little difference to me, as I could get what I wanted without money, as I was well acquainted and my credit was good, and [I] could get plenty of cash if I wanted it by merely asking for it.

I left San Jose in the morning after breakfast for Gilroy's rancho on foot, driving my horses before me. One of them had my packsaddle and blanket, and the small one my saddle. The horses were so weak that when they got off the road among the dry mustard stalks it would throw them down.

About sundown, as I was striking off the road for Gilroy's rancho, a couple of miles away, I met Dr. A. S. Taylor^{*} and others with him, with a heavily loaded California cart, on their road to the gold mines. It had been fitted out by Mr. James Watson,^{*} a storekeeper in Monterey; and his eldest son, Mr. Francis Watson, who was going to the mines with [it], had gone to San Isidro to pass the night at Cantin Ortega's^{*} house, the cart going on farther with the rest of the party to camp out where there was good feed for the animals. The Doctor wanted me to stop with them and told me they had plenty of bottled porter and other things, but I declined and went on to the rancho, where I stopped that night.

Alexander S. Taylor, a native of South Carolina, had reached California by way of China in September, 1848. Although generally called "Dr. Taylor," he is not known to have practiced medicine or to have possessed any higher collegiate degrees. He had an unbounded enthusiasm for the Indians and history of California, and he later wrote voluminously on these and other subjects. Unfortunately, only a few of his works have stood the tests of scholarship and time.

James Watson was one of California's oldest Anglo-Saxon pioneers, having arrived about 1824 aboard a whaler. With his usual superior air, Sir George Simpson noted in 1842 that Watson was a Londoner whose father had "been in the public line," keeping "the Noah's Ark, 'tween the Globe Stairs, and the Horse Ferry." Despite a lack of education, Watson was industrious and honest, and he gained wealth as one of Monterey's most prominent merchants. He later turned to ranching, only to be wiped out by the drought of 1863. His son, Francis, was about eighteen years old in 1848.

Quintín Ortega was the son of Ignacio Ortega, original grantee of Rancho San Isidro. In later years the ranch was divided between Quintín and his brother-in-law, John Gilroy. Quintín's house was about 50 yards from Gilroy's, and the boundary line dividing the ranch ran between the two dwellings.

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Next morning I was on the road for the Mission of San Juan. When I arrived near the Pajaro River the horses made a rush for it, and the pack horse went so far in that he got stuck in the mud, and I

could not get him out. And he was too weak to get out himself, and the other horse was too weak to pull him out. And as I had no one to help me, I had to take off the packsaddle and put it on the other horse with the rest of the things and leave the pack horse sticking in the mud of the Pajaro River, though I suppose he got out himself or someone else took him out, as I left word in San Juan about it, though I never seen or heard of the horse afterwards.

On my arrival in San Juan I stopped at the house of Mr. Patrick Breen^{*} that night, but he could scarcely believe that I had only made 3 lbs. of gold in the mines, as he said he had made 25 lbs. in one month, with one of his boys; but in gold digging there is a great deal of chance work, and it is not always the case that those who do most work get most gold. In fact, it is often the reverse.

Patrick Breen was an Irishman who came overland to California with the Donner party. He and his large family settled at San Juan Bautista early in 1848. The José Castro adobe, to which Breen acquired title on February 7, 1849, still stands on the plaza.

Soon after I arrived there Patrick Cox,^{*} a soldier belonging to Co. F, U.S. 3rd Artillery, arrived, having left Monterey the night before, taking French leave from his company, i.e., absent without leave from his post. Cox had been a tailor before he joined the U.S. service, and he was on his road for the gold mines to make his pile. I don't know whether he did so or not, but I believe he died there or in some other part of California years ago, but I never saw him again after I left the Mission of San Juan.

Patrick Cox appears on the Co. F muster roll as a private. Beyond Swan's brief remarks, virtually nothing is known about him.

Next morning after breakfast I left San Juan for the Salinas River, but I traveled slow, as my horse would stop every now and then to take a bite along the road, and I wished to get him to Monterey if I could. But it was sundown before I reached Mr. Thomas White's house on the Salinas River, where I stopped that night, though he was not there himself, but his family was. Thomas White, or 31 Thomas Blanco as the Californians called him, had come to California in 1840 in the United States sloop of war *St. Louis* and deserted from her, went into the redwoods near the Pajaro River and worked there, married a California girl and was living on the Salinas River when the mines broke out, and died, I believe, in 1850.^{*}

Tomás Blanco, as Tom White was called by the Spanish-speaking Californians, was granted a small tract of land on the Salinas River on August 27, 1844; and the place became known as Blanco Crossing, or Blanco. The name is perpetuated by the railroad station, Blanco, about four miles west of Salinas.

It took me till 2 p.m. next day to reach Monterey, for I could buy no feed for the horse at Blanco's, and I had to stop on the road to let the horse feed. When I arrived in Monterey one of the soldiers offered me \$16 for the horse, poor as he was. And I sold him, and he took him up to the fort, and though he was pretty weak for a while, plenty of Uncle Sam's hay and barley put him in good order, and when he went on furlough next spring to the mines, he took the horse with him and sold him there for ten ounces of gold—not a bad speculation, as it cost nothing to feed the horse while in Monterey.

I had brought the pick back with me that I had bought in the Dry Diggings for an ounce, and picks being scarce and high, I sold it for \$5 to a man going to the mines and sold the gold dust I had brought down with me for ten dollars the ounce. About three months afterwards it was worth \$16 per ounce, but the loss of a few dollars or hundreds were nothing in [the] early days of gold mining in California, and people thought very little about them.

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CHAPTER FOUR

BACKWARD GLANCES

IT MAY BE ASKED BY READERS OF THIS NARRATIVE why the horses became so poor among the mountains. Grass is naturally scarcer amongst timber, and most of the miners had their horses tied with a rope or lariat for fear of their straying off and losing them, shifting them several times in the course of the day. But as the feed was scant, the animals did not thrive; and there was no one at that time in the Old Dry Diggings [who] made a business of taking charge of the miners' horses for pay, though shortly afterwards there was some started in that line of business.

It was amusing to hear people's opinions of placers and gold mining. However, none could laugh much at others, as we were all pretty much on a par so far as mining experience was concerned, though a man that had been a month or two in the mines was considered an experienced miner

and was often looked on as somewhat of an oracle. Sometimes the old miners, as they called themselves, to make fun of some newcomer on his asking their advice, would point out some place where they thought there was no gold as a likely place for him to work, of course expecting he would give it up and try somewhere else in a short time. But in some cases the newcomer would strike better diggings than the old hands and would have not only the gold 33 dust but the laugh in their favor.

Most of the mining done in the Old Dry Diggings when I was there was done with the pan and crevicing. There was very few rockers there. I saw one at work soon after I got there, and it took 3 men to work it, one to put in the dirt, one to rock it, and one to pour the water in the rocker with a tin gold pan, for they had no dipper. The pay dirt was hauled from some of the small ravines with an oxcart to the pool of water where the rocker stood, near the trading posts.

One of the soldiers who had left Co. F, U.S. Artillery, while we were sitting round our campfire one evening, said his idea of a placer, before he came to the mines, had been a large flat piece of ground with stones on it, and all he had to do was to turn over the stones and pick up the gold that was under them. Some said that after next winter's rain there would be plenty more gold washed into the ravines that had been worked out, and some thought they would find out the fountainhead and take it out by the ton. But then, allowance must be made for people making mistakes about a business they were so little acquainted with.

A great many miners the first year thought the mines were too cold to winter in and went down to the coast to pass the winter and relieve themselves of their heavy weight in gold dust; and most of them were not long in doing so, but then, they had great hopes of the future and the big piles they were going to make. Some few did afterwards make a great deal of money, but very few kept it, more's the pity. But gold in the early days of California mining seemed to be oiled, as it used to slip through the fingers so easily, while nowadays it seems to have birdlime or cobbler's wax rubbed on it, as those that possess it now seem to keep such a tight grip on it.

While going to the mines in the mountains, I was struck with the resemblance to the mountains in Mexico I had 34 traveled through in going from Mazatlan to Durango in 1840 and thought there ought to be gold placers there as well as in the Sierra Nevada in California. I was amused at seeing some of the machines made in New York City and sold to some of the gold seekers who came out in 1849 in the *California*, the first steamer that arrived of the line between San Francisco and Panama. Some of them were boxes about 3 feet long and half that [in] width, and iron grating or sieve on the top, and a drawer in the bottom. The dirt was to be thrown on the grating and water on top of it, but both dirt, gold, and most of the water went into the drawer and choked it up.

I believe none of these fancy gold machines went to the mines, though a lot of them came to California by the first steamer. No doubt the inventor made a good speculation out of it, as I suppose they sold well to the green gold seekers who were leaving New York to come to California, though I believe none of them were green enough to take them to the mines with them after they arrived in California. The New York gold-saving machines were a great invention, but unfortunately they labored under the disadvantage of saving the dirt as well as the gold; and the miners only wanted the latter metal and were down on the machines, as they could get plenty of dirt in New York without having to come to California after it.

But few of the miners who were camped with me in the Log Cabin Ravine or going to it are now living. Some went to the Atlantic States or Europe, and the bones of many of them are now bleaching among the gulches and ravines of the Sierra Nevada.

In the above narrative I have given an account of transactions as they passed before me. California scenery has been so often described by people better qualified than myself to do so, that I have said nothing about it. I have wrote the above from memory, as I kept no notes.

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If the above is not suited to the taste of grammarians, from the badness of the grammar, they must make allowance for the fact that I left school when little over eleven years of age and have studied

grammar but little since and when a boy at sea. I used to often get a rope's ending for reading books when I could get an opportunity and sometimes neglecting other work to do so.

In the early days of California people were not valued altogether, as they are now, for the broad lands, number of cattle, or gold they possessed. Something was then allowed to their character as men, but now everything is swallowed up in the almighty dollar; and instead of people asking about a person's character, they ask him how much money he has got. How he acquired it don't seem to trouble the inquirer.

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